

role of the Church and world. He gives particular emphasis to the role of the local church and its bishop, centered on the Eucharist. It is only within this ecclesiology of communion that the ministry and magisterium of the Bishop of Rome is discussed. In the chapter on the world there is an extended discussion of anthropology, creation and membership in the Church.

The final part of the book is devoted to dialogue: ecumenical, interreligious and the dialogue of the Church with emerging concerns in society. It is here that his ecumenical vision and expertise show through most clearly. In the relationship of the Church and other world religions we have some of the most creative, and possible controversial, proposals of the volume. The last chapter outlines a variety of challenges facing the Church as it moves towards the future, and proposed ways of approaching these developments.

Thomas J. Reese, *A Flock of Shepherds: The National Conference of Catholic Bishops* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1992). Pp. 406.

When bishops come together in synod, council or conference, their primary calling is to celebrate the eucharistic unity of Christ's Church and to proclaim the orthodox Apostolic Faith. The Church of the East has been more likely to rely on the synodical nature of the Church for its witness and communion than the Roman Catholic Church. Among the western churches, the Anglican and Protestant communions may well have more in common with the synodical life and the relationships of laity and clergy in governance practiced in Orthodoxy than does Roman Catholicism. However, since the renewal of the Second Vatican Council, collegiality, conciliarity, and participation have become priorities in Roman Catholic ecclesiology as well.

One among the multitude of renewed structures of ecclesial communion that celebrate the eucharistic unity of the Church and wider participation in its decision making, are national episcopal conferences. While these are not yet synodical or conciliar bodies in the full theological or canonical sense, they do witness to the collegial and conciliar character of a renewed Roman Catholicism. This sort sociological study of the twenty five year history of the US Episcopal Conference is an important contribution to understanding American church life and the renewal of worldwide Catholicism. This is not a theological study, nor does it engage or even disclose the details of

debates about the canonical and theological roles of these conferences. However, its journalistic style and attention to current detail and personalities make it engaging reading.

Being basically a sociological study, theologically and historically informed, it covers a variety of aspects of conference life: the demography of the US hierarchy, the structure of the conference and its committees, the prehistory of the US episcopal collaboration, the role and attitudes of staff in the conference, the leadership of the conference and key personalities who have influenced its direction, the finances of the conference, tensions in the conference debates, the relationship of the US bishops to the government and communication with and relationship to Rome. Five short appendices including the mission statement, 1991-96 goals and objectives, lists of pastorals and statements, current legislative priorities and canons (from the 1983 code) that mention episcopal conferences. The data in this volume and the interpretations provide a useful counterweight to the press coverage of the annual meetings, which tend to focus on both the secular and controversial rather than on the fully textured relationships, theological bases and on going work of the Conference.

The reader will find some fascinating reflections that counter the critiques of the US churches and the Roman Catholic bishops. The positions of the bishops in the public forum, on abortion, the economy or international policy tend to be given the highest profile. However, the fact of the matter is that these elements of social witness, deeply rooted in the Church's social and moral teaching, are among the least controversial issued dealt with over the years. The record shows that 90% of the social teaching is supported by 90% of the bishops or more. While criticism often attempts to devide the staff, modest in number and resources given the size of this Church, from the bishops and people. However, the study shows that the activities and priorities of the conference are those of the bishops themselves.

The relationships with the Church universal and the bonds of communion between this national Church and the others and with the Church of Rome are quite interesting. Given that these structures of collegiality and communion are in the process of development, reflection and growth, one expects that communication among the various elements of the Church becomes extremely important. What is often reported in the secular press as tensions can in fact be seen as moments of common discernment of the call of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. While there may still be less participation of

laity in the governance of this Church than might be warranted by our understanding of Christian baptism and the participatory experience of American culture, this study discloses those places where lay leadership is emerging in the US.

As the Church moves forward in faithful response to Christ's mandate for witness and unity, it will be important for the Christian communities to draw on one another's experience. The collegial structures of the Roman Catholic Church in these last twenty five years have benefited greatly by reflection on the synodical tradition of the Orthodox Churches. The ecclesiology of communion that is central to any authentic understanding of Church remains the bed rock underlying these conference developments and the attempts of the US bishops to be faithful to their mission in their home dioceses, in the Church universal and in the US. The clarity about the role and integrity of the local bishop is clear in both the experience of conference and in Roman Catholic ecclesiology.

It is fascinating to note that the concerns for canonical practice and liturgical detail are among the more contentious and difficult elements in the Conference debates. This is due to structural questions about who and how decisions are to be made. However, it also witnesses to the discernment of how the role of bishop as teacher relates to the bonds of communion that keep the Church worldwide in communion. The short twenty five years of experience is an important moment in the centuries long process of spiritual renewal implied in the Vatican Council. This book will be an important contribution to this reflection and discussion.

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Michael Azkoul, *The Influence of Augustine of Hippo on the Orthodox Church, Texts and Studies in Religion*, Vol. 56 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990). Pp. 299. Soft

The present volume was written by a person who is ultra conservative. The main objective of the book is to clarify Augustine's place in the Orthodox Christian tradition and to conclusively prove that



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An Exegesis of the *Epitaphios Threnos*

ANTON C. VRAME

WHEN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS WISH TO EXPLORE the significance of a particular icon, most likely their primary source is Lossky and Ouspensky's, *The Meaning of Icons*.¹ Missing from this important work, however, is the icon of the *Epitaphios Threnos* – The Lamentation at the Tomb. Seen by clergy at every Divine Liturgy, it is the icon printed on the *antimension* (the consecrated cloth that lies on the holy Altar Table). Seen by the faithful during Holy Week, it serves as the focal point of the liturgical *anamnesis* of the death and burial of Jesus Christ. The purpose of this paper is to offer an exegesis of the icon, based on the liturgical and sermonic tradition, to show the high degree of visual and verbal integration in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church.

The icon itself has a tangled history, as it exists as both a painting and an embroidered piece, and shall not be presented here.² However, the source for the image of the *Epitaphios*, the dead body of

¹Vladimir Lossky and Nicholas Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons, Revised Edition* (Crestwood, 1982.) The original text was first published in 1952.

²See Kurt Weitzmann, "The Origin of the Threnos" in *Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky Vol. 1*, De Artibus Opuscula XI, Millard Meiss, ed. (New York, 1961), pp. 476-90 for a discussion of the painted icon. Pauline Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery* (Chicago, 1967) is the primary source for understanding the embroidered icon's history. See also Robert Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 2nd ed. Orientalia Christiana Analecta 200 (Rome, 1978), pp. 216-19 for a presentation on the role of the *Epitaphios* Icon in the Liturgy.

Christ being attended to and mourned over by the Virgin Mary, a group of women, John the Beloved Disciple, Joseph of Arimathea and Nikodemos is not found in the New Testament. In the Gospel of Luke there is only a brief reference to lamentation (Lk 23.48) where people leave the scene of the crucifixion beating their breasts. Also, the references to the deposition of the body of Jesus and his entombment are very brief (Mk 27.59, Mk 15.46, Lk 23.53, Jn 19.40). Rather, the origins of the icon are located in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nikodemos*³ which is contained in the *Acts of Pontius Pilate*, another apocryphal source. This document contains a number of texts purporting to recreate Pontius Pilate's diary for the day when he encountered Jesus Christ. The document also describes the events of the Deposition and the Entombment of Christ. The second form of the document contains the Lament of the Virgin:

And the mother of God said, weeping: 'How am I not to lament you, my son? How should I not tear my face with my nails? This is that, my son, which Symeon the elder foretold to me when I brought you, an infant of forty days old, into the Temple. This is the sword which now goes through my soul. Who shall put a stop to my tears, my sweetest son? No one at all except yourself alone, if, as you said, you shall rise again in three days.'⁴

From this text, later homilists expanded the Virgin's lament, notably George of Nikomedia in the ninth century. According to Belting, this homily was read in churches on Holy and Great Friday in connection with a nighttime Passion service in the Middle Ages. Over time the verbal image was translated into a painted icon to meet the needs of new Holy Week rites in the Eastern Church.⁵

Unfortunately, most contemporary embroidered *epitaphioi* are oversimplified images which depict a meditative gathering of figures around the body of Christ lying in repose. Painted images, on the other hand, usually are much more detailed and expressive, thus al-

³ The date of the Apocryphon of Nikodemos has been debated since the 19th century. The current consensus places the document around A.D. 600. See Anna Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of An Image* (Princeton, 1986), pp. 10-11.

⁴ *Acts of Pilate (Gesta Pilati)* 11. trans. O. Clough (Indianapolis, 1880), p. 161.

⁵ Hans Belting, "An Image and Its Function in the Liturgy: The Man of Sorrows in Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 34-35 (1990-1981), p. 5.

lowing for a more detailed exegesis. Photios Kontoglou describes the elements of the painted icon as follows:

The Cross is in the middle of two mountains. And below it lies a large marble slab, covered with a sheet. Christ is lying on the slab, dead and naked. Panagia [the Virgin Mary] is kneeling or is seated at his head; crying, she is embracing her son and kisses his face. Opposite her is the Noble Joseph [of Arimathea], old and with a medium beard, kneeling; he kisses the pure foot of the Lord. John, bent and lamenting with a grievous expression, kisses the hand of the Lord. And behind Joseph, stands Nikodemos, with a black and rounded beard, leaning on a ladder, with his hand on his cheek, beholding the Lord with tear-filled eyes. Also the holy women lament, pulling the hair on their heads, and Mary Magdalene is stretching her arms toward heaven, and cries out loud. Laying on the ground, in front of the slab, is the basket with the nails, the pliers, the hammer, and the vessel with water and wine, with which the wounds of the Lord were washed (Mt 27.59, Lk 23.53, Jn 19.40). The title of the icon is The Lamentation at the Tomb.⁶

When contemplated in its liturgical setting of Holy and Great Friday, the devotional purpose of the *Epitaphios* is explained. Like a verse by verse scriptural exegesis, the elements of the icon are interpreted by the liturgical and sermonic tradition for the day, guiding the response of the worshiping community to the event of the burial of Christ. While scholars assume that the words were written before the image was used liturgically, we can see how the iconographer captures their intent. Also, we can think about how the words and image come together to inform the worshipers about the event depicted, form their imaginations about the moment, and offer an interpretation of it through a perspective of transformation, chiefly the destruction of death and the restoration of humanity through the resurrection of Christ.

The Cross. The empty cross stands in the center of the icon. The instruments of the Passion are near: the crown of thorns hangs from the cross, the lance and the sponge stand on either side.⁷ The wor-

⁶ Photios Kontoglou, “Ἐκφρασις τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου εἰκονογραφίας, 1, (Athens, 1960), p. 178.

⁷ Pauline Johnstone, *Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, points out that they began to appear in the embroidered *epitaphioi*, around the sixteenth century. p. 40. However, frescoes from earlier periods show them. See Weitzmann, “Origin of the Threnos,” and Belting, “The Man of Sorrows.”

shiper is informed that this is the cross of Jesus, for the abbreviation “IC XC” is placed on the crossbar. Also the plaque at the top bears the abbreviated inscription “The King of Glory” (“Ο Βασιλεὺς τῆς Δόξης). It is not the usual INBI (Greek) or INRI (Latin) for “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” Rather, the Byzantine artist paints from a Johannine interpretation of the Passion, where Jesus discussed the nature of his kingship with Pilate (Jn 18.33-38). Also indicative of the Johannine influence is the lance, which is mentioned only in John’s Gospel (19.34). The phrase “King of Glory” also refers to Psalm 24.7-10. There the King of Glory is the Lord mighty and strong. The Byzantine artist, by placing this inscription over the cross, has identified the paradox of the kingship of Christ with his suffering and passion. In a fourth century sermon, Epiphanius of Cyprus also refers to the Psalm in his description of Christ entering Hades to destroy death: “Who is the King of Glory, that now works in Hades that which has never been wrought in Hades? Who is this, that now leads out from hence them that from ages past have fallen asleep?”⁸

The Women. Surrounding the main figures of the icon is a group of women in various poses of grief. Their presence is noted by a hymn for Holy Saturday:

He who closed the abyss lies before us dead; and as a corpse the Immortal is wrapped in linen with sweet spices and laid in a tomb. The women come to anoint him with myrrh, weeping bitterly and crying: “This is the most blessed Sabbath on which Christ sleeps, but on the third day he shall rise again.”⁹

According to Henry Maguire,¹⁰ there are nine Byzantine gestures of grief, six of which usually appear in this icon. The most violent

⁸Epiphanius of Cyprus, “An Homily on the Burial of the Divine Body of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” in *The Lamentations of Matins of Holy and Great Saturday*, Trans. Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Boston, 1981), p. 47.

⁹*The Lenten Triodion*. Trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware (London, 1978), p. 649. Margaret Alexiou points out that in a fifteenth century Cypriot song for Good Friday, the Virgin Mary has called the women to join her in the lament. She also notes that in today’s practice, it is customarily women who come to the parish to decorate the *kouvouklion* or tomb of Christ with flowers. Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, (London, 1974), p. 70.

¹⁰Henry Maguire, “The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 31 (1977) 123-74.

gestures are the tearing of hair and pulling at garments, a rare action in icons.¹¹ Some of the women, including Mary Magdalene show evidence of having done this – their hair and garments are loose. Their hands are on their cheeks, another expression of grief. This type of action was specifically added to the *Epitaphios*, “in order to bring extra pathos to the burial of Christ.”¹² Sometimes we see a woman with her veil pulled closely around her head and covers her mouth, indicating that she is “stifling cries of grief.”¹³

Mary Magdalene. The most demonstrative and dramatic of the women is Mary Magdalene whose hair is loose with hands in the air, reaching toward the heavens. This gesture was added to the icon in the eleventh and twelfth centuries “in order to heighten the drama.”¹⁴ Mary’s gesture of grief is expressed verbally in the *Acts of Pilate*:

‘Hear, O peoples, tribes, and tongues, and learn to what death the lawless Jews have delivered him who did them ten thousand good deeds. Hear and be astonished. Who will let these things be heard by all the world? I shall go alone to Rome to the Caesar. I shall show him what evil Pilate has done in obeying the lawless Jews.’¹⁵

Typically the women the Virgin Mary and John, have dark lines under their eyes in a long triangular shape, the marks of crying.¹⁶

Joseph and Nikodemos. Compared to the women, Joseph and Nikodemos are the most stoic of all the figures, although Nikodemos does have his hand on his cheek – a sign of grief. But, neither has the lines of tears under the eyes. Joseph is dressed in a purple tunic, the color of wealth. He bends down toward the body of Christ, holding the white sheet as if to begin wrapping the body. The Lamentations of Good Friday evening repeatedly remind the worshipper of the event, “Joseph and the blessed disciple Nikodemos tend the life-giving Body.”¹⁷

Joseph’s stoic demeanor is belied by the words from the *Acts of Pilate* as well as other hymns. In the *Acts of Pilate*, Joseph says:

Ah me! sweetest Jesus, most excellent of men, if, indeed, it be proper

¹¹ Ibid. p. 129.

¹² Ibid. p. 145.

¹³ Ibid. p. 152.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 160.

¹⁵ *Acts of Pilate* 11.

¹⁶ Maguire, “The Depiction of Sorrow,” p. 169.

¹⁷ *The Lamentations*, p. 28

to call you man, who has wrought such miracles as no man has ever done. How shall I enshroud you? How shall I entomb you? There should now have been here those whom you fed with a few loaves; for thus should I not have seemed to fail in what is due.¹⁸

The influence of the *Acts of Pilate* on the later hymnographer is quite evident as we can see similar phraseology. However, the hymnographer has added more information in the way of interpretation and imagery:

Joseph with Nikodemos took you down from the Tree, who decks yourself with light as with a garment; and looking upon you dead, stripped, and without burial, in his grief and tender compassion he lamented, saying: "Woe is me, my sweetest Jesus! When but a little while ago the sun saw you hanging on the Cross, it wrapped itself in darkness; the earth quaked with fear and the veil of the temple was rent in twain. And now I see you for my sake submitting of your own will to death. How shall I bury you, my God? How shall I wrap you in a winding sheet? How shall I touch your most pure body with my hands? What songs at your departure shall I sing to you, O compassionate Savior? I magnify your sufferings; I sing praises of your burial and your resurrection, crying: O Lord, glory to you."¹⁹

In the hymns nothing is said about Nikodemos apart from Joseph. Nikodemos is his assistant in the process, a fact which is recorded by the Gospel of John (19.39). Clearly he has been working, a fact which may be indicated by Nikodemos' tunic being rolled up to mid-calf, still holding the ladder. Weitzmann points out that in some early manuscript illustrations Nikodemos may be seen digging the grave of Christ.²⁰ However, in this icon Nikodemos, Joseph, and John are in an act of *proskynesis*, "strengthening the devotional and liturgical character of the composition."²¹

John. If little is said about Nikodemos liturgically, nothing is said about John. Weitzmann states, "no literary source for John's presence at the Bewailing" exists, but sees the influence of the *Koimesis* of the Virgin and the need for John to accompany Mary, whom Christ had entrusted to John as the probably reasons for his presence in the icon.²² However, a thirteenth century Franciscan text, incorrectly at-

¹⁸ *Acts of Pilate*, 11.

¹⁹ *The Lenten Triodion*, pp. 615-16.

²⁰ Weitzmann, "Origins of the Threnos," p. 479.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 486.

²² *Ibid.*

tributed to Saint Bonaventure of the twelfth century, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*²³ places John at the scene and an active participant in the Deposition from the Cross and Lamentation.

However what can be said about John has already been included with the figures mentioned earlier. John is seen in the center of the icon, bowing toward Christ, an act of veneration. Reverently, John is about to touch the body of Christ. John's hand is upon his cheek, again a gesture of grief. The lines under his eyes indicate tears.

The Virgin Mary. Of all the figures, the one most commented upon is the Virgin Mary. We must remember that it is her lament, reported chiefly in the *Acts of Pilate*, and its elaboration in the homily of George of Nikomedia, as well as others, which created the religious context for the icon itself. Also, it is this image which becomes the prototype for the Renaissance Pieta.²⁴

There are two possible poses for Mary. In the first, Mary is seated, holding the head and shoulders of Christ. She has been crying; we can see the lines under her eyes. She embraces her son tenderly and very intimately. Her poise in the situation is contrasted to the grief of the other women present who are much more demonstrative. Her dress is undisturbed, the veil of her *maphorion* is still in its usual position. The composure of the Virgin, despite these intense lamentations “suggested an inner training... the Virgin was to appear as a prototype of model behavior.”²⁵ The stars on the shoulder and forehead of her cloak are traditional reminders of her ever-virginity, before, during, and after the birth of Christ.

This pose is attributed to Saint Bonaventure’s *Meditations*.²⁶ In the *Meditations*, Mary holds the head of Christ while the others tend

²³ *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, chapters 80-82, trans. Isa Ragusa (Princeton, 1977), pp. 338-45. This Franciscan devotional text, written to “make the reader an eye-witness to the events” (p. xxviii) was probably written by a monk in Tuscany in the second half of the thirteenth century. That an Italian text may have influenced Byzantine icons is a possible indication of the contact that existed among Western and Byzantine society. However, this is my speculation. Scholars discussing the Epitaphios have little to say about the role that this text had on the icon’s development.

²⁴ Weitzmann, p. 476.

²⁵ Belting, “The Man of Sorrows,” p. 9.

²⁶ Johnstone, *Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, p. 39. She is the first to mention the influence of the Franciscan text on the icon, but offers no explanation.

to the rest of the body; she will clean and cover the face. When it is time, she begins her lament:

My Son, I hold you in my lap dead. Separation by your death is exceedingly hard, for the intercourse between us was joyful and delightful and we lived among others without quarreling or offense. In spite of this, you, my sweetest Son, have been killed as though a criminal. ... You abandoned yourself for love of mankind, whom you wished to redeem. Hard and exceedingly painful is this redemption, in which I rejoice for the salvation of man. But in your sorrows and death I am much afflicted, for I know that you never sinned and that you are destroyed without cause in a bitter and disgraceful death. Therefore, my Son, our companionship is broken, and I must now be separated from you. I, your most sorrowful mother, shall bury you; but afterwards where shall I go? Where shall I then stay, my Son? How can I live without you? Willingly I would be buried you, to be with you wherever you are. But if I cannot bury my body, I would be buried in mind. I shall bury my soul in the tomb with your body; I send it to you; I commend it to you. O my Son, how terrible this separation is!²⁷

The second pose for Mary is to see her leaning on the body of Christ about to kiss his face. This has been called a “significant innovation” of the Byzantine artist, drawing out the depth of her sorrow and “demonstrating the reality of Christ’s incarnation.”²⁸ This dogmatic reality is made clearer in the Virgin’s lament of George of Nikomedia’s homily:

Behold, [Lord], your benign dispensation [of the incarnation] has taken its end...For now you, the bestower of all breath, recline in bodily form, without breath. I am now holding and embracing the body without breath of the maker of the universe, the controller of my own breath. ... I am now kissing the motionless and wounded limbs of him who cures the incurable wounds of nature. ... I am now embrac-

²⁷ *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, ch. 82, p. 344.

²⁸ Maguire, “The Depiction of Sorrow,” p. 161. He, as well as Belting, makes the comparison between the Lamentation and the Virgin *Eleousa*, of which the Virgin of Vladimir is an example. The chief similarity is the closeness of Mary and her son, cheek to cheek. Both see the Virgin *Eleousa* anticipating the Passion of the son, and in the lamentation a recollection or *anamnesis* of the infancy of the child. This can also be seen in the rhetoric of the lamentation, which hearkens back to the childhood of Jesus.

ing the voiceless mouth and silent lips of the maker of every natural power of speech. ... I am kissing the closed eyes of him who invented the operation of sight.²⁹

Mary's lamentation is a major theme of the hymnology for the day, perhaps eclipsed only by the more dogmatic ideas about the meaning of Christ's death. They repeat many of the ideas already mentioned, but a few contain dialogue which add to their poignancy and intimacy. They are worth highlighting because Christ will answer them in other hymns.

Seeing her own Lamb led to the slaughter, Mary His Mother followed Him with the other women and in her grief she cried: 'Where do you go, my Child? Why do you run so swiftly? Is there another wedding in Cana, and are you hastening there, to turn the water into wine? Shall I go with you, my Child, or shall I wait for you? Speak some word to me, O Word; do not pass me by in silence. You have preserved my virginity, and you are my Son and God.'³⁰

Some verses from the Lamentations direct the Virgin's grief to her son: "When the most pure Virgin saw you prone, O Logos, a mother's dirge she sang to you." The very next stanza offers the dirge: "O, my most sweet Springtime! O, my Son beloved, to where does your beauty fade?"³¹

Jesus Christ. The figure of the dead Christ is the central reality of the icon, both from a devotional perspective as well as a dogmatic. These points are well made in the icon by the attention to the burial preparation. Christ rests on a stone slab, called the Red Stone of Ephesos, or the stone of anointing. It was here that the body was

²⁹Ibid. p. 162. The homily is Oratio 8, PG 100. 1488A-B. A later homily also reported by Maguire, by Symeon Metaphrastes, echoes George of Nikomedia's thoughts: "Nikodemos alone ... placed you painfully in my arms, which even lately lifted you joyfully as an infant ... And once I took care of your swaddling-clothes, and now I am troubled with your funerary apparel. I washed you in lukewarm water, now I bathe you in hotter tears. I raised you in a mother's arms, but leaping and jumping as children do. Now I raise you up in the same arms, but without breath, and lying as the dead. Then I dipped my lips in your honey-sweet and dewy lips... Many times you slept on my breast as an infant, and now you have fallen asleep there as a dead man." (PG 114. 261B-C)

³⁰*Lenten Triodion*, pp. 619-20.

³¹*The Lamentations*, p. 27.

prepared for burial. This stone was supposedly brought to Constantinople in the twelfth century and placed in the Church of the Pantokrator by Emperor Manuel Komnenos.³² Constantinopolitan worshipers would have seen the actual stone itself and would recognize it in the icon. Near the stone are the basket holding the nails and the tools used to remove them. Also a jar containing the wine and water used to wash the body of Christ. The body of Jesus is about to be wrapped in the linen sheet brought by Joseph.

However, this scene of death is transformed. Christ's face is peaceful. He is sleeping a life-giving sleep, which the hymns have alluded to more than once: "Today You keep holy the seventh day, which you have blessed of old by resting from your works. You bring all things into being and you make all things new, observing the Sabbath rest, my Savior, and restoring your strength."³³ The ribs and muscles of Christ's torso are well-defined, weakened and emaciated. But the figure of Christ, while bearing the marks of crucifixion clearly, is not a "tortured" body, dirty or beaten. Thus, the mystery of the Passion of Christ is placed before the worshiper. In the death of Christ, death has been overcome. As the hymn states:

The fall of Adam brought death to man but not to God. For though the earthly substance of your flesh suffered, yet the Godhead remained impassible; that which was corruptible in your human nature you have transformed to incorruption, and by your Resurrection you have revealed a fountain of immortal life.³⁴

The death of Christ has transformed humanity, making divine life possible:

By death do you transform mortality, and by your burial, corruption. With divine power you make incorruptible the nature you have taken, rendering it immortal; for, O Master, your flesh saw not corruption, nor was your soul left in hell as that of a stranger.³⁵

Another interesting feature of the hymnology of the day is that Christ responds to his mother's lament. He answers her questions about his passion and death. He invites her to stop her cries: "La-

³² Johnstone, *Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, p. 36.

³³ *Lenten Triodion*, p. 648.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 649

³⁵ Ibid. p. 648.

ment not, O my Mother, I endure the Passion to set free Eve and Adam.”³⁶ Another verse repeats and extends his request with the reasons for his death, repeating the above themes: “That I may renew man’s corrupted and subverted nature, gladly in my flesh do I now take death on me. Wherefore Mother, be not stricken with lament.”³⁷

The Mountains. In the Lamentation, even the landscape of the background grieves. The mountains are barren to “convey the sorrow of the occasion.”³⁸ Hymns also reflect a universal grief: “O you hills and valleys, all you mountains and dales, and you multitude of humankind, weep and lament, crying ‘Woe!’ with me, the Mother of our God.”³⁹ The earth not only grieves, but fears receiving the body of the dead Christ: “When the earth received you, O Fashioner, into her bosom, she was rent with fear, O Savior, and quaked in fright, and by these her quakings did she rouse the dead.”⁴⁰

The question that usually arises after reflecting on the words connected with the icon is “What kind of imagination was able to place words in the mouths of the Virgin, Joseph of Arimathea, the mountains, and in the dead Christ?” Maguire has explored this question and points to the devices of classical rhetoric which were taught in Byzantine schools. He believes that the artists, living in this milieu unconsciously transferred “particular rhetorical exercises and particular figures of speech (which) influenced the decoration of Byzantine churches; these techniques of rhetoric passed from the schoolroom into the literature of the church, and from the literature of the church onto its walls.”⁴¹ For the Lamentation, the device of *ethopoia* or character study was particularly effective. *Ethopoia* dealt with the internal psychology of the character and expressed it in speeches. From this simple description alone, we can re-appreciate the speeches of the main figures. Hymnographers and homilists may have been well versed in these devices and employed them in

³⁶ *The Lamentations*, p. 29.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 16.

³⁸ Maguire, *Art and Eloquence*, p. 108. He compares the mountains of the Lamentation to the mountains of the Transfiguration fresco in the same church. The former are bare, while the latter are lush and filled with plant life, thus emphasizing the emotions raised by each event.

³⁹ *The Lamentations*, p. 12

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 18.

⁴¹ Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence* (Princeton, 1981), p. 4.

their work. The artists would have been influenced to paint what they were hearing in church.

The interweaving of visual and verbal elements may seem overwhelming, and to most twentieth century minds it may be. However, apart from the sermonic material which is no longer heard in Orthodox parishes today, the vast majority of the hymns that have been presented are heard. In fact, the people themselves frequently sing the Lamentations along with the chanters, choir, and clergy. Margaret Miles states that the original function of religious images was to lead "the worshipper to imitate and participate in the qualities and way of life formulated by the image."⁴² Clearly by the hymns and the image the Orthodox worshiper is led to contemplate the death and burial of Christ and respond with grief at the horror of his passion, but still with faith in the resurrection. The icon of the *Epitaphios Threnos* provides an excellent example of how visual and literary elements are masterfully integrated to achieve this in the life of the community.

⁴² Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight* (Boston, 1985), p. 150.



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The Elder Philotheos influenced numerous people—men and women, scientists and scholars—who visited him in his monastery of Longovarda where he served as Abbot. This is evidenced by the thousands of letters he received and answered, from and to people from all over the world. Included are several illustrations and pictures of the Elder and of important places.

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George C. Papademetriou
Hellenic College

Constantine Cavarnos. *Biological Evolution*. Etna, CA: Center for Traditional Orthodox Studies, 1994. Pp. 34.

Professor Constantine Cavarnos, who also has a background in

biology the previously theories on evolution and an Orthodox Christian response to them.

After a survey of the several evolutionary theories, the author focuses on Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and points out the criticisms against it by philosophers and scientists.

Professor Cavarnos maintains that Darwin's theory is not "scientific fact" as erroneously stated by some evolutionists. Darwin himself speaks of it as a "hypothesis." The author presents six analytical supportive reasons which point to evolution as a "hypothesis."

Professor Cavarnos uses his broad philosophic, scientific, and patristic background to objectively and analytically present his "hypothesis" of evolution and clear the air for Christians to understand the divine origin of human beings. He adds as evidence the opinion of ancient and modern philosophers and theologians. He presents a clear and precise understanding of scientific method and the philosophical and metaphysical presuppositions of the natural sciences.

This book is necessary reading for persons in every field of study in order to clearly understand the theory of evolution. It is written in a clear and flowing style so that the reader will be guided to understand that man and nature are creations of God and not "spontaneous generations," and to perceive the misuse of science by atheistic and materialistic forces.

George C. Papademetriou

Orthodoxia. Series 2, No. 3 (July-September 1994). An official publication of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

This journal began publication in 1926 in Instabul and terminated in 1963. In 1994, publication was renewed in a second series under the supervision of a Synodical Committee of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The editor is Most Reverend Demetrios, Metropolitan of Sevasteia. Professor John Foundoulis of the University of Thessalonike (Greece) is responsible for the publication and circulation of this important journal whose patron and supporter is the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I. The major part of the publication is in Greek, but also, English, French, and German are used.

The third issue has now circulated. It contains sermons, chronicles, activities, and reports of visits to other Orthodox Churches.



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The present volume on Byzantine iconography by Professor Cavarnos is a great contribution to the witness of Orthodoxy in the western hemisphere. Dr. Cavarnos, a professor of philosophy with deep faith steeped in the rich Orthodox Christian tradition writes in a classical way about the distinctive characteristics of Byzantine iconography. This volume is also a guide to the pattern of decorating Orthodox Christian Churches with panel icons, wall paintings, and mosaics.

The author discusses Byzantine iconography as a sacred art and describes its history, themes, the way of portraying persons, garments and objects, and the aesthetics of icons. Also given are detailed explanations of iconography in relation to the doctrinal, liturgical, and festal meaning of holy icons. Included is the concise systematic exposition of Saint John Damascene on the defense of holy icons. The volume includes numerous illustrations and relates where each icon appropriately belongs according to reasons explained from the long and rich tradition of the Orthodox Church. This is an impressive volume that enlightens the readers with the inner richness of Christian Orthodox iconography.

This volume is a necessary acquisition for those interested in investigating where icons and biblical scenes belong in the church structure. The book is important too for every Orthodox Christian to read the volume in order better to understand the function and meaning of icons. Also included are a useful bibliography, numerous references to the Church Fathers and modern writers on iconography.

I highly recommend this excellent volume to Orthodox and non-Orthodox, and to scholars and the general public, alike.

George C. Papademetriou

Constantine Cavarnos. *Modern Orthodox Saints. Volume 11. Blessed Elder Philotheos Zervakos*. Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1993. Pp. 240.

The Elder Philotheos Zervakos (1884-1980) was one of the most astute modern Orthodox Christian personages. Professor Cavarnos vividly portrays this remarkable spiritual guide and vigorous defender of Orthodoxy.

The author begins his book by relating his personal experience with Elder Philotheos and includes valuable conversations and cor-

respondence that he had with him.

Professor Cavarnos describes the Elder's education and the relationship of Philotheos with Alexander Papadiamantes, the renown popular Greek novelist, who also taught him sacred Byzantine music. Other relationships included are those with the author's spiritual Father, Nektarios, the Saint/theologian and with the master iconographer, Kontoglou, who was also the spiritual son of the Elder.

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The Elder Philotheos influenced numerous people—men and women, scientists and scholars—who visited him in his monastery of Longovarda where he served as Abbot. This is evidenced by the thousands of letters he received and answered, from and to people from all over the world. Included are several illustrations and pictures of the Elder and of important places.

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Ethical Teaching in Saint Gregory the Theologian's Writings

STANLEY S. HARAKAS

GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN OF CONSTANTINOPLE IS THE MOST illustrious, the "most excellent" theologian of the Church after the Evangelist John. The theological depth and the intense poetic tone of his work have elevated him to a theological prototype of unique beauty and brightness. Gregory was the poet who became a great theologian. Sensitivity characterized his being in an all-emcompassing way; it led him to repeated disappointments, to a pattern of continuous escape from situations in which he was enmeshed by third parties, but always with his own consent. His "escape" was the product of his heightened sensitivity and his call to the isolated neptic life. He believed that the greatest *praxis* is *apraxia*, which is the life of spiritual *theoria*, the life of the vision of God.¹

This assessment of Gregory the Theologian by patrologist Stylianos Papadopoulos does not auger well for a discussion of the ethical teaching of the saint. We could conclude that systematic theologians are not ethicists, that poets evoke truth but do not explicate it, that "escape" (*phyge*) does not further engagement with moral issues, and that a *praxis* that is in substance an *apraxia* leading to *theoria*, would in all likelihood disdain the ordinary course of life which ethics deals with.

¹ Stylianos G. Papadopoulos, et al., *Μιλάει ὁ Γεργύρως Θεολόγος: 1600 χρόνια μετά τήν κοίμηση του* (Athens, 1991).

It is interesting to note that few, if any, handbooks on Patrology speak of Gregory's ethical teaching, as is the case with other Church Fathers. For example, Johannes Quasten has no such category in his treatment of Gregory the Theologian,² nor does Georges Florovsky in his volume on *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century*,³ nor does Panagiotis Chrestou in his monograph on Gregory,⁴ nor does Jaroslav Pelikan in his volume on *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*.⁵ There is a vast bibliography on Saint Gregory the Theologian, but very little of it deals with anything remotely connected with ethics as a theological discipline.⁶

Nevertheless, reading Gregory from a distinctively ethical perspec-

² Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Utrecht, 1966), p. 236-54.

³ Georges Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century*, volume seven of the Collected Works, ed., Richard S. Haugh, trans. Catherine Edmunds (Vaduz, 1987), ch. 5.

⁴ Panagiotis K. Chrestou, Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος: ὁ μύστης τῆς θείας Ἑλλάμφεως (Thessalonike, 1990).

⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* Vol. 2 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago, 1974).

⁶ A selection of some of these writings includes the following: Bernard Coulie, *Les Richesses dans l'œuvre de Saint Gregoire de Nazianz* (Louvain, 1985); Rose de Lima, *The Late Greek Optative and Its Use in the Writings of Gregory Nazianzen* (Washington, DC, 1943); George Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzos* (Princeton, 1969); Paul Gallay, *Gregoire de Nazianzus* (Paris, 1959); Paul Gallay, *Lettres (par) St. Gregoire de Nazianze* (Paris, 1964, 1967, 2 vols.); Robert Clark Gregg, *Consolation of Philosophy: Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1974); Christoph Junch, ed., *De Vita Sue [Εἰς τὸν ἔαυτοῦ βίον]* (Heidelberg, 1924); Charles William King, trans., *Julian the Emperor: The Two Invectives* (London, 1888); Manfred Kertsch (commentary) and Robert Pella, ed., *Carmina de Virtute* (Graz, 1985); Alois Kurmann, *Gregor von Nazianz, Oratio 4 Gegen Julian: Ein Kommentar* (Basel, 1988); E. P. Maijering, *God—Being—History: Studies in Patristic Philosophy* (New York, 1975); Iustinus Mossay, *Reportorium Nazianzenum Orationes, Textus Graecus Recensuit* vol. 1, Codices Galliae, *Gregory Nazianzen, Discours, Sources Chretiennes*, vols. 247, 250, 270 284, 309, 318 (Paris, 1978); Gregory Nazianzen, ed., *Lettres Theologiques de Gregoire de Nazianze Sources Chretiennes*, Vol. 208 (Paris, 1974); Gregory Nazianzen, *La Passion du Christ: Tragedie*, Andre Tuilier, ed., *Sources Chretiennes*, vol 149, (Paris, 1969); Andreas Knect, ed., *Gegen die Putzsucht der Frauen* (Heidelberg, 1972); Jean Plaginieux, *Saint Gregoire de Nazianzen, Theologian* (Paris, 1952); Tomas Spidlik, *Gregoire de Nazianze: Introduction à l'étude de doctrine Spirituelle* (Rome, 1971); J. W. C. Wand, *The Greek Doctors* (New York, 1950); Donald F. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study of Gregory of Nazianzos* (Cambridge, MA, 1979); Michael Wittig, ed., *Briefe/Gregor von Nazianz Eingeleitet Ubersetz und Mit Anmerkunge Vershen* (Stuttgart, 1981); Ioannis Wrobelii, *Tyranni Rufini Oratorionum Gregorii Nazianzeni Novem Interpretatio* (Leipzig, 1910).

tive fills one's net with a rich harvest of material, if by ethics we do not only mean a sustained rational argument on deontological or teleological themes. If the net is expanded to include methodological reflection, Gregory qualifies as one who does ethical reflection. Ethical discourse also encompasses the emotive character of ethical reflection. Ethics in an emotive mode teaches about right and wrong on the basis of what is praised and what is condemned. Gregory has much to teach regarding ethics in this case, since such writing is a valid source and guideline for ethical reflection. Further, if we include within the purview of ethics some fundamental doctrinal affirmations regarding the essential foundations of Christian ethics, the catch becomes greater still. Gregory also provides his reader with a significant number of purely ethical judgments on many practical issues. These teachings pepper the Theologian's writings, especially the *Orationes* on deceased loved ones and the letters.

In this paper, I will illustrate these five aspects of the ethics of Gregory the Theologian. My purpose is not an exhaustive treatment of the ethics of Gregory the Theologian, but only to affirm the appropriateness of such a perspective. I seek to do this by examining briefly a few samples of the following: his clearly articulated ethical judgments; the ethically oriented doctrinal teachings of the saint; emotive treatments of moral issues; methodological statements; and Gregory's reflections that can illuminate contemporary discussions of moral issues.

Specific Ethical Judgments

Though not often in a deontological or ought-language format, Gregory frequently expresses moral judgments about right and wrong. His style is to appeal to a commonly held moral stance, or to express values in the form of personal judgments. Thus, for example, he condemns our human penchant for negatively judging one another:

We observe each other's sins, not to bewail them, but to make them subjects of reproach, not to heal them, but to aggravate them, and excuse our own evil deeds by the wounds of our neighbors. Bad and good men are distinguished not according to personal character, but by their disagreement or friendship with ourselves.⁷

⁷ *In Defense of His Flight to Pontos, Or.*, NPNF, Vol. 7, sec. 80, p. 221.

Clearly, the judgment is one of disapproval for such behavior, exhorting the opposite as morally appropriate.

It is a patristic *topos* to criticize the use of cosmetics by women. In his poem Κατὰ γυναικῶν καλλοπιζομένων, he thus judges, “If nature has given beauty, do not hide it under cosmetics (*aloiphe*).⁸ Another example of direct ethical direction comes from his Oration on *Love for the Poor*. He writes “Now, if following Paul and Christ himself, we have to maintain that love is the first and greatest of all commandments, the sum of all the laws and prophets, I suggest that the main part of love is the love for the poor and mercy and compassion for our fellow brethren.”⁹ In addition, many of Gregory’s letters begin with an unargued statement of some moral commandment, upon which he bases the specific content of his epistle. Gregory, thus, often clearly articulates ethical commandments.

Theological Doctrine as Source for Ethics

Our Gregory, however, is “the theologian.” In his teachings about other matters, he often articulates doctrines that are essential for the development of a Christian ethic. Here too, he expresses an ethical perspective. Thus, Gregory witnesses to the source of the Good in God, a fundamental and essential affirmation of Christian ethics. Gregory teaches in his oration *On His Flight to Pontos* that God, “is all goodness, and beyond all goodness”¹⁰ and in his oration *On the Theophany*, he further notes that God’s goodness could not be contained in self-contemplation. God’s self-contemplation, he says, “alone could not satisfy goodness, but good must be poured out and go forth beyond Itself to multiply the objects of Its beneficence, for this was essential to the highest goodness.”¹¹

Another example of the relevance of Gregory’s doctrinal teaching is his instruction about human nature. One element of this doctrine is the combined understanding of human beings as both free and endowed with an inborn inclination to God and the good. In describing the creation of humanity, Gregory speaks of God as

⁸ Andreas Knect, ed., *Gegen die Putzsucht der Frauen* (Heidelberg, 1972) 18.

⁹ *On Love For the Poor*, 5. Quoted in Peter C. Phan, *Social Thought*, vol. 20 of *The Message of the Fathers of the Church* (Wilmington, 1984) 122 (PG 35.864). Translation slightly revised, substituting “love” for “charity.”

¹⁰ *In Defense of His Flight to Pontos*, Or. NPNF, Vol. 7, 220.

¹¹ *On the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ*, Or. NPNF, sec. 9, 347.

having honored (humankind) with the gift of Free Will (in order that God might belong to [humanity] as the result of [humanity's] choice, no less than to Him who had implanted the seeds of it) . . . Also He gave [humanity] a law, as a material for his Free Will to act on (*προαίρεσις*).¹²

Elsewhere, he writes

This, indeed, was the will of Supreme Goodness, to make the good even our own, not only because sown in our nature, but because cultivated by our own choice, and by the motions of our will, free to act in either direction.¹³

Other doctrinal areas discussed by Gregory that are essential for ethics are the nature of Evil, growth from avoiding evil to doing the good more fully and perfectly, and the doctrine of *Theosis*.

Emotive Treatments of Moral Values

An important way by which Gregory deals with moral and ethical issues is emotively. By this term, ethicists mean that a behavior is commanded or prohibited by means of praise or condemnation. Functionally, words of praise or condemnation extend their meaning normatively, so that to praise something is to enjoin others to emulate it; and, vise-versa, to disparage an act as evil is equivalent to instructing others that they should not do it themselves. For example, the Panygerics of Gregory on his father Gregorios, (including praise of his mother Nonna),¹⁴ his brother Caesarios,¹⁵ his sister Gorgonia,¹⁶ and on Saint Athanasios,¹⁷ and Saint Basil all exhibit an emotive dimension of ethical discourse. Let one example suffice. His effusive praise of the Christian life of his sister Gorgonia in his eulogy of her is an example of emotive ethical language. Thus, of her he asks rhetorically,

¹²Or. 37, *On the Words of the Gospel*, “When Jesus Had Finished These Sayings,” Or. 32, NPNF, sec. 20, 343.

¹³In Defense of His Flight to Pontos, NPNF, sec. 17, 208.

¹⁴Or. 18.

¹⁵Or. 7.

¹⁶Or. 8.

¹⁷Or. 21.

Who opened her house to those who live according to God with a more graceful and bountiful welcome? And, that which is greater than this—who bade them welcome with such modesty and godly greetings? Further, who showed a mind unmoved in sufferings? Whose soul was more sympathetic to those in trouble? Whose hand more liberal to those in want? . . . She was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a mother to the orphan . . . and [she] oftentimes entertained Christ in the person of those whose benefactress she was . . . The sole wealth she left to her children was the imitation of her example, and emulation of her merits.¹⁸

I chose this passage among a plethora of others, precisely because of its clear ethical dimension, in which virtues of philanthropy are praised, but also because in this passage it is clear that Gregory intends to show these same virtues as objects of imitation and emulation.

Methodological Statements

Gregory's writings also include methodological statements of great value. Space allows only a few examples, some of which have practical applications. Gregory takes into consideration the moral presuppositions of those whose actions he judges. He is far from being a rigid and literal moral fundamentalist. He says about the priest, in the 2nd Oration, that he must not

suppose that the same things are suitable to all . . . but he must consider base conduct a fault in a private individual, and deserving of chastisement under the hard rule of the law: while in the case of the ruler or leader it is a fault not to attain to the highest possible excellence, and always make progress in goodness, if indeed he is, by his high degree of virtue, to draw his people to an ordinary degree, not by force of authority, but by the influence of persuasion.¹⁹

In the same work he argues that there must be an integrity of means and ends. He parallels the wrestler who must fight according to the rules with the Christian who contends for Christ. No matter

¹⁸*On His Sister Gorgonia*, Or. 8, NPNF, sec. 12, 241.

¹⁹*In Defense of His Flight to Pontos*, Or. 2, NPNF, sec. 15, 208.

how able the wrestler might be, he says, if he violates the rules, “he will be shouted down and disgraced and lose the victory.” In like manner, Gregory asks, “shall anyone contend for Christ in an unchristlike manner, and yet be pleasing to peace for having fought unlawfully in her name?”²⁰

Dominant in Gregory’s ethical decision-making is an Aristotelian penchant for the middle place between extremes—*mesotetes*. In the end, he justifies his prior avoidance of ordination and his latter acceptance of it with this device of ethical judgment. “the one course marks the rash, the other the disobedient, and the undisciplined. My position lies between those who are too bold, or too timid; more timid than those who rush at every position, more bold than those who avoid them all.”²¹ In speaking of his brother Caesarius, he notes that when he retired from office, he was “obedient herein to our Christian law, which bids us, when occasion offers, to make ventures on behalf of the truth, and not be traitors to our religion from cowardice; yet refrain, as long as may be, from rushing into danger . . .”²²

In the 37th Oration, in a commentary on the Matthean passage about eunuchs who were born such and those who choose the celibate life for the sake of the Kingdom, Gregory focuses on intention in decision-making. He says “the good which is by nature is not a subject of merit; that which is the subject of purpose is laudable . . . Claim merit if you please by willing the better things. You will claim it, if being carnal, you make yourself spiritual . . . , if while chained down to the flesh, you show yourself superior to the flesh.”²³

The Theologian emphasizes the need for both right faith and works commensurate with them. In his *Oration on Holy Baptism*, he concludes his summary of the ten chief points of the Christian faith with this statement: “Then, in the tenth place, work that which is good upon this foundation of dogma; for faith without works is dead, even as are works apart from faith.”²⁴

²⁰Ibid. sec. 85, 222. The translation ends with a period, not a question mark. But the sense of the paragraph clearly supports the understanding of the last clause as a question only.

²¹Ibid. sec. 112, 226.

²²*Panygeric on His Brother S. Caesarios*, Or. NPNF, Or. 7, sec. 14, 234.

²³*On the Words of the Gospel . . .*, Or. 32, NPNF, sec. 16, 342.

²⁴*Or. on Holy Baptism*, Or. 40, NPNF, sec. 45, 377.

Ethical Reflections Contributing to Contemporary Issues

I end this survey of the ethical elements in the works of Gregory the Theologian with two examples of how Gregory's teaching, either directly or indirectly, can contribute to some contemporary ethical debates. The first deals with ecology and the second with the purpose of the punishment of criminals as an aspect of prison reform.

One of the most striking rhetorical passages in the *Theological Orations* is the treatment of the wonders of the created world (2nd *Theological Oration*). These passages would be remarkable no matter who might have written them. But for one who in his mystical dimension has so little positive to say about the material world, i.e., the body and the flesh, they are all the more remarkable, for in them, we share in the Theologian's awe and respect for creation. While paragraph after paragraph flows in this manner, I can only take a sliver of this writing to illustrate what he says:

[C]onsider the tribes of birds, and varieties of form and color, both of those which are voiceless and of songbirds. What is the reason of their melody, and from whom came it? Who gave to the grasshoppers the lutes in their breasts, and the songs and chirruping on the branches, when they are moved by the sun to make their midday music, and sing among the groves, and escort the wayfarer with their voices? Who wove the song for the swan when he spreads his wings to the breezes, and makes melody of their rustling? For I will not speak of the forced voices, and all the rest that art contrives against the truth.²⁵

Gregory draws his own conclusions from his question—not only that God is the creator of all this loveliness, but that he frames it in what we could call today an ecologically wholistic approach. Note the almost contemporary ring to these words written sixteen centuries ago.

Next, I pray you, traverse the length and breadth of the earth, the common mother of all, and the gulfs of the sea bond

²⁵E. R. Hardy and C. C. Richardson, eds., *The Second Theological Oration—On God, Or. 28. Christology of the Later Fathers*, Vol. 3, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia, 1949), sec. 24, 152.

together with one another and with the land, and the beautiful forests, and the rivers and springs and abundant and perennial. . . . Tell me how and whence are these things? What is this great web unwrought by art? These things are no less worthy of admiration in respect of their mutual relations than when considered separately.²⁶

Clearly, modern Christian reflection on ecology can be enriched by such passages, which run counter to the charges made against Christian thought that it has fostered the ecological disasters of our times.

In the ongoing discussion regarding criminal justice, the purpose of punishment in the penal system is continually debated. Some argue that the punishment of criminals exists to protect citizens from dangerous actions of law breakers. Others see the punishment of criminals as a form of public retribution to make the criminal pay for the harm done by his actions. Others hold that punishment exists in order to make laws credible and to instill the fear of them. Others believe that the motive behind the punishment of criminals should be their reform and restoration to society as useful citizens. In his 77th epistle, Gregory lends weight to a Christian approach that supports the latter view, but does not discount totally some of the other purposes. He writes

We think it an important matter to obtain penalties from those who have wronged us: an important matter, I say, (for even this is sometimes useful for the correction of others)—but it is far greater and more God-like, to bear with injuries. For the former course curbs wickedness, but the latter makes men good, which is much better and more perfect than merely not being wicked.²⁷

Gregory characteristically does not opt for only one of the various purposes of criminal punishment, but places them in a hierarchy. Punishment to restrain criminal behavior has a social value. But for the Christian the goal of “making good men” outweighs restraint from doing evil.

In the same letter, his position regarding the enforcement of the

²⁶Ibid. 154.

²⁷*Miscellaneous Letters*, 77, NPNF, 471.

law is articulated in a rising hierarchy of values:

You see the sequence of goodness. First it makes laws, then it commands, threatens, reproaches, holds out warnings, restrains, threatens again, and only when forced to do so strikes the blow, but this little by little, opening the way to amendment. . . . (Let) us choose to show ourselves merciful rather than severe, and lovers of the poor rather than of abstract justice . . .²⁸

Conclusion

My goal in this paper has not been to turn Gregory the theologian into Gregory the ethicist, but to show that there are dimensions to his writings that can be legitimately called ethical. I have sought to support the view that the Theologian is a significant resource for the doing of ethics from within the patristic mind-set and tradition.

²⁸Ibid. 472.



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Gregory the Theologian: An Enlightened View of Marriage

JOANN HEANEY-HUNTER

GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN HAS ENRICHED THE CHURCH WITH HIS breadth of work. Throughout his life as a presbyter, bishop, and contemplative, he presented orations and wrote poetry which are among the most beautiful in early Christianity. A person who obviously cared for and about his family, he preached moving orations when they died. Throughout his life, he applied all the tools which his classical education provided him. His work is characterized by skillful rhetorical usage and the elements of the education which he and his brother Caesarios received. Despite the large number of writings extant, scholars note that he is probably the least well-known of the Cappadocian fathers.¹

In recent years, some aspects of Gregory's writing, such as his theology of the trinity and the human person have been examined.²

¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus, Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford, 1969), 1.

² For further studies about Gregory the Theologian, see: Gerard Ettlinger, S.J., "The Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus: A Study in Rhetoric and Personality," in *Preaching in the Patristic Age: Studies in Honor of Walter J. Burghardt*, S.J., David Hunter, ed. (New York, 1989), pp. 101-18; Gerard Ettlinger, S.J., "Θεὸς δὲ οὐκ οὐτως: (Gregory of Nazianzos, Oratio 37): The Dignity of the Human Person according to the Greek Fathers" in *Studia Patristica* 16, ed. Elizabeth Livingstone (Berlin, 1985), pp. 368-72; D. Meehan, "St. Gregory Nazianzen and Hellenic Humanism," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 57 (1944), pp. 255-64; F. W. Norris, "Of Thorns and Roses. The Logic of Belief in Gregory Nazianzen," *Church History* 53 (1984), pp. 455-64; J. Plagnieus, "Saint Grégoire de Nazianze," *Théologie de la vie Monastique* (Aubier, 1961), pp. 115-30; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzos*.

These studies have contributed significantly to the fuller understanding of Gregory's writing. One area, however, needs to be developed further: his understanding of Christian marriage, which is found scattered throughout his orations, correspondence and poetry. In two articles, Gerard Ettlinger has established that Gregory's concepts of Christian marriage are unusual and even extraordinary for the time.³ Still, Gregory exhibits some attitudes toward marriage which are very traditional for his time and culture; it would be unfounded, therefore, to call him a "feminist."⁴ The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine in detail Gregory's views of marriage in selected orations, correspondence and poetry to see if, in fact, they reveal a significantly different perspective from that of his contemporaries. By exploring the background which shaped his writing, and studying the writings themselves for their content and form, it will be possible to analyze the contribution which Gregory the Theologian has made to the study of the history of Christian marriage.

Background

Gregory's life was similar to the lives of other wealthy families living in the Cappadocian region. He probably was born in the village of Arianzos, outside the city of Nazianzos, to prosperous, landowning parents. His writings tell us that his mother was a devout Christian, and that his father was a convert to Christianity, and later, bishop of Nazianzos. Gregory had an older sister, Gorgonia, and a younger brother, Caesarius, whom he loved very much. As was the custom of the wealthy at that time, Gregory's parents sent him and his younger brother abroad for a classical education.⁵ They studied in Caesarea, Alexandria, and later, Athens, where Gregory spent ten years perfecting the art of rhetoric. During his education, he became acquainted with Basil, also from the region of Cappadocia, and the two became lifelong friends.⁶ Over the course of their lives, their relationship was marked with both joys and difficulties, but despite the trials, Gregory and Basil remained close.

Another important element of Gregory's life was his desire to retire

³ Gerard Ettlinger, S.J., "The Dignity of the Human Person," pp. 371-72, and "Gregory of Nazianzos: Rhetoric and Personality," pp. 103-10.

⁴ Ettlinger, "Gregory of Nazianzos: Rhetoric and Personality," p. 105.

⁵ *De vita sua 2/1/11*, 112-265.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 225-49.

from the world and lead a contemplative life. Events prevented this, however, and Gregory became a church leader in Nazianzos and Constantinople before achieving his life's dream of contemplation. His theological orations date primarily from his years as bishop, and his poetry dates mainly from the contemplative years of his life. Gregory's life took various directions and had many influences, which affected both the form and the content of his work.

Gregory's orations and poetry also were affected by his rhetorical education. Throughout his writing, he utilized many conventional rhetorical devices, which influenced both the form and content of his work.⁷ It is important to note, however, that while Gregory's style and emphasis were affected by his rhetoric, it seems certain that his oratory reflected many of his true feelings.⁸ By using the vehicle of rhetoric, Gregory was able to voice his emotions in a language consistent with his education.

Gregory's Concepts of Marriage

In his work, Gregory often supports traditional beliefs about society and the Church and affirms a significant number of the conventional beliefs on marriage and the family. For example, he clearly states that wives should be submissive to their husbands and should maintain their rightful place in the home. He notes that even his own mother Nonna, whom he lauds in many places throughout his orations and poetry, knew her place and was a better woman because she was subject to her husband in almost every matter. Furthermore, he states that woman's subjection is due mainly to the fact that Eve became an enemy rather than a helpmate. In keeping with the views of the time, he reiterates the idea that the woman beguiled the man and estranged him from paradise.⁹

Despite the inherent inferiority of woman in marriage, Gregory expresses strong admiration for his mother and sister. He states clearly that they are superior, not only to most women but to many men as well. What is remarkable, however, is the reasoning behind his claims of superiority. Nonna and Gorgonia were exalted because they were

⁷ For example, he employed epideictic form in the funeral orations for his family members. For a full treatment of the subject see Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher*, pp. 55-128.

⁸ Gerard Ettlinger, S.J., "Gregory of Nazianzos: Rhetoric and Personality," p. 101.

⁹ *Or. 18.8.*

“manly” in spirit. Only by transcending their weak feminine nature were they able to exceed the accomplishments of most people. For Gregory, however, both of them transcend their nature not through a life of virginity, but through marriage. Nonna, for example, displays great virtue as she provides religious training for her children,¹⁰ and Gorgonia exhibits holiness as she carries out her marital duties and responsibilities.¹¹

Another traditional value which Gregory usually upholds in his writings on marriage is the superiority of virginity over the nuptial life. Gregory frequently repeats that virginity is a higher calling presumably because it leaves an individual free from the distractions of the world.¹² Despite his insistence on the elevated status of the virgin, however, he declares that married life is a holy state which is not to be denigrated. Interestingly enough, he believes that one can attain the spirit of virginity while living in a marriage relationship, because virginity is not simply an absence of sexual intercourse, but a way of life which expresses detachment from the world and a simplicity and purity of soul. Gorgonia was a clear example of the married “virgin.”

She was able to avoid the disadvantages of each, and to select and combine all that is best in both, namely, the elevation of the one and the security of the other, thus becoming modest without pride, blending the excellence of the married with that of the unmarried state, and proving that neither of them absolutely binds us to or separates us from God. . . .¹³

Many of the above statements are fairly conventional for their time, and do not reflect someone who is beyond the mainstream of his Christian or social culture. Despite these traditional views, however, a considerable amount of Gregory's writing on marriage is unusual for its positive direction.

Gregory's statements on marriage fall into several categories. First, there are those passages which praise the marriages of his family

¹⁰ *De rebus suis* 2/1/1, p. 120. See also *De vita sua* 2/1/11, p. 61.

¹¹ *Or.* 8.8.

¹² *Or.* 37.10, and *Or.* 39.13.

¹³ *Or.* 8.8.

members, particularly in his parents' and his sister's marriages. For him, his parents, sister and brother-in-law represent exemplars of the married life-style. In the funeral orations for his father and his sister, for example, he praises their marriages as models for others. His commentary on his parents' marriage, for example, leads him to conclude that they are a latter day Abraham and Sarah.¹⁴ He recalls the book of Proverbs as he describes the gift which his mother was to his father:

I have heard the Scripture say: Who can find a valiant woman? and declare that she is a divine gift, and that a good marriage is brought about by the Lord. . . . But we can mention none who has been in this respect more fortunate than he [Gregory the Elder]. . . . For the most excellent of men and of women were so united that their marriage was a union of virtue rather than of bodies: since while they excelled all others, they could not excel each other, because in virtue they were quite equally matched.¹⁵

Undoubtedly, Gregory has high regard for his mother; he sees her as being equal to his father in every way, even though she acceded to his authority in most matters.¹⁶ There was, however, one notable exception to her submission. In matters of faith, Nonna was her husband's teacher, and she did not hesitate to accept that role. Gregory sees this as a remarkable element of the relationship which they shared:

But she who was given by God to my father, became not only, as is less wonderful, his assistant, but even his leader . . . not being ashamed, in regard of piety, even to offer herself as his teacher.¹⁷

Gregory recognized his mother's excellence as a teacher, which was significant for the time. What was even more remarkable, however, was Gregory the Elder's submission to Nonna's faith instruction. "Admirable indeed as was this conduct of hers, it was still more admirable

¹⁴*Or.* 8.4.

¹⁵*Or.* 18.7.

¹⁶*Or.* 18.4.

¹⁷*Or.* 18.8.

that he should readily acquiesce in it.”¹⁸

Gregory states that his mother was a woman of great virtue, praying constantly, and serving the poor; in short, a model of Christian character for all those with whom she came in contact. Obviously too, Gregory learned a great deal from the marriage of his parents, who were examples for their children and the Christian community which they served.

According to Gregory’s writing, Nonna was not the only significant female in his life. It is apparent that Gorgonia also was an important figure for him. He speaks of her affectionately, and holds her up to the community as a standard of Christian womanhood and marriage. In the funeral oration for Gorgonia, Gregory describes her attributes at great length.¹⁹ He declares that his sister is a noble woman, with an outstanding Christian marriage. He points out, with some pride, that it is fitting that Gorgonia should be this way; for she is just like her two parents, who were responsible for her piety and her good life.²⁰ Like her mother, Gorgonia is virtuous because she knows her place in marriage, and is submissive to her husband, her head. She also, however, served as a religious instructor, converting her husband and making him a fellow-servant instead of an unreasonable master.²¹ Furthermore, she taught her children the ways of Christianity through her goodness and charity. Throughout the work, Gregory makes it clear that Gorgonia finds holiness and gives glory to God precisely in her marriage bond.

In evaluating these two writings, and the things which Gregory says about marriage in them, certain factors become apparent. First, Gregory obviously loves his parents, sister, and brother-in-law, and is impressed both by their marriages and their good works. He asserts that they have been models for him and for others in the Christian community, and he marvels at the fact that these women are capable of acting as teachers for their husbands. According to Gregory, the women in his family were able to remain virgins in a spiritual sense, not because they abstained from their marital duties, but because

¹⁸*Or.* 18.8.

¹⁹From the oration itself, it appears that Gorgonia died before her father, but after her brother Caesarios. See *Or.* 8.23.

²⁰*Or.* 8.5.

²¹*Or.* 8.20. Here, Gregory describes the good fortune of his brother-in-law Alypios. “If you wish me briefly to describe the man, I do not know what more to say of him than that he was her husband.”

they maintained proper spiritual priorities: God came first, with everything else, including charity, child rearing, and teaching, flowing from devotion to God.

Second, it is crucial to recall that despite Gregory's deep feelings for his mother and sister, the funeral orations are classical panegyrics, which follow conventional rhetorical rules.²² Gregory evidently is trying to present his sister in her very best light, and is attempting to console his mother on the death of his father. Despite the obvious use of rhetoric, however, one must note Ettlinger's point:

He loved his family and friends, and was able to express his feelings in a way that few other early Christian writers could or did. He was a person of great sensitivity, especially with respect to problems in human relationships, both in the lives of other people, and to an extent rarely found in ancient writers, in matters that directly affected him and his own life. . . .²³

In the funeral orations, Gregory presents his deepest feelings about his family members whom he loves, and his positive attitudes toward the Christian marriages which he has experienced.

Gregory also presents views on marriage in more general orations. As a pastor, he demonstrates sensitivity to marriage relationships which is unequalled in any other early Christian writer. This is best exemplified in Oration 37, on Matthew 19, where he demands to know why the laws of marriage bind men and women unequally:

The question which you have put seems to me to do honor to chastity, and to demand a kind reply. Chastity, in respect of which I see that the majority of men are ill-disposed, and that their laws are unequal and irregular. For what was the reason why they restrained the woman, but indulged the man, and that a woman who practices evil against her husband's bed is an adulteress, and the penalties of the law are very severe; but if the husband commits fornication against his wife he has no account to give? I do not accept this legislation; I do not approve of this custom. They who made the Law were men,

²²Ruether, pp. 70-75.

²³Ettlinger, "Gregory of Nazianzos: Rhetoric and Personality," pp. 102-03.

and therefore their legislation is hard on women . . .²⁴

This piece is extraordinary in its articulation of the necessity of equal fidelity for men and women in marriage. He adheres to the idea that, since the marriage bond is equal, men and women should be equally faithful to their commitments.²⁵ Gregory, the sensitive, outspoken pastor, uses his scriptural knowledge and his finely honed rhetorical skills to declare that men and women must both maintain marital fidelity.

In the same oration, Gregory points out that women and men deserve equal treatment in marriage because both are responsible for the sin, and conversely, both are saved in Christ.

How then, do you demand chastity, while you do not yourself observe it? How do you demand that which you do not give? How, though you are equally a body, do you legislate unequally? If you inquire into the worse—the woman sinned, and so did Adam. The serpent deceived them both; and one was not found to be the stronger and the other the weaker. But do you consider the better? Christ saves both by his passion. Was he made flesh for the Man? So he was also for the woman. Did he die for the man? The woman also saved by his death. He is called of the seed of David; and so perhaps you think the man is honored; but he is born of a Virgin, and this is on the Woman's side. They two, he says, shall be one Flesh; so let the one flesh have equal honor.²⁶

This is significantly different from the work of other writers, who assert that Eve is primarily responsible for the sin.²⁷ It is even different

²⁴Or. 37.6-7, translated by Charles Gordon Browne in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, (hereafter NPNF), 7, 2nd series (Grand Rapids, 1989), pp. 339-40.

²⁵Gregory's view is significantly different from that of Basil expressed in *Letters* 188.9 and 199.21, where he states, rather reluctantly, that the custom of allowing men lenience in matters of marriage while treating women's transgressions harshly is unjust, but will continue to prevail in society.

²⁶Or. 37.7, in NPNF, 7, p. 340.

²⁷See, for example, Ambrose, *Paradiso*, 4.24; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 3.22.4; John Chrysostom, *Discourse 4 on Genesis*, 1; Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum*, I.1.2. One notable exception to this idea can be found in Clement's *Stromateis* 3.16, where he states that men and women are sinners because they follow the bad example of the first parents.

from other passages in Gregory, for example, *Oration 18*, the funeral oration for his father, where he assumes that the burden for the first sin rests solely on the woman.²⁸ Therefore, the understanding of the original sin and its implications for marriage found in *Oration 37* is unique for its time. While most other authors are ready to accept the idea first articulated in 1 Timothy 2.11-15, which declares that woman is submissive because of the sin, Gregory argues, at least in *Oration 37.6-7*, that both are culpable for the transgression, but both are saved in Christ, and therefore, both should have equal responsibilities in the marriage.

Oration 39, On the Feast of the Holy Lights, which was delivered on the feast of the Epiphany, 381, provides a reader with further insights into Gregory's views of marriage. In this work he takes issue with the teaching of the rigid Novatus,²⁹ whose controversies with Cyprian were well-known, and points out that the way of Novatus was hateful and harsh, and furthermore, very inconsistent regarding sexuality and marriage.

Will you refuse to grant liberty of marriage to young widows on account of the liability of their age to fall? Paul ventured to do so; but of course you can teach him; for you have been caught up to the Fourth heaven . . . and comprehend a larger circle in your Gospel.³⁰

In this passage, Gregory wonders why Novatus should presume to argue against Saint Paul's concession of second marriage for young widows. While he admits that second marriage exists primarily to help the young widow from falling into sin, he insists that this is a compassionate position for those who wish to be married again. To demand celibacy after a single marriage, to him, is unfair, especially in light of the fact that Paul permitted it. This contrasts directly with the Montanist writing of Tertullian, and the work of John Chrysostom, both of whom insist that remaining single after the death of the spouse is proper Christian conduct.³¹ On this subject, Gregory demonstrates

²⁸ *Or. 18.8.*

²⁹ In 251, Novatus, a presbyter from Carthage, championed the cause of Novatian for bishop against Cornelius, who was allowing the repentant lapsed to return to the church.

³⁰ *Or. 39.18*, in NPNF, 7, 2nd series, p. 359.

³¹ Tertullian, *De Monogamia* 2-10; and John Chrysostom, *To a Young Widow* 3.

a view of second marriage which is fairly unusual for his time.

Finally, in *Oration 40, On Holy Baptism*, Gregory introduces another positive dimension of his attitude toward Christian marriage: the idea that the gift of baptism can help sustain and support Christian marriage. Marriage is not an obstacle to baptism, but a way in which baptism can be lived.

Are you bound by wedlock? Be bound also by the Seal; make it dwell with you as a guardian of your continence, safer than any number of eunuch or of doorkeepers. Are you not yet wedded to flesh? Fear not this consecration; you are pure even after marriage. I will take the risk of that. I will join you in wedlock. I will dress the bride. We do not dishonor marriage because we give a higher honor to virginity. I will imitate Christ, the pure Groomsman and Bridegroom, as He both performed a miracle at a wedding, and honors marriage with His presence.³²

This passage is an interesting commentary on Gregory's understanding of marriage, as a gift which flows from Christian baptism. Not only does he encourage people who are married to remain faithful to their marriages, but he states that he will "take the risk" to honor marriage even though virginity has a higher place. For just as Christ championed marriage by performing a miracle at Cana (John 2:1-11), Gregory supports those who enter into the holy state of Christian marriage, and values the contributions which they make to the Church as married persons.

The orations of Gregory provide us with a view of marriage which is significantly different from that of his contemporaries. He obviously has a high regard for the women in his family and their marriages, and he appreciates the things which they have accomplished within the context of their own marriages. While there is no doubt that he considers virginity to be a superior calling, his attitudes toward marriage are among the most positive of the time. In addition, he is outspoken in his defense of the equal nature of marital fidelity in *Oration 37*, where he insists that the prevailing customs dishonor the marriage bond as God intended it. While other writers of the

³²*Or. 40.18*, trans. Charles Gordon Browne, in NPNF 7, p. 365.

period³³ have noted that Paul asserts the equal rights over the bodies of spouses (I Cor 7.4-5), Gregory is articulate in his opinion that the society of the time does not live up to the expectations which Paul established.

His positive perspective on marriage may also be found in some of his correspondence. Most notable in this regard are two letters which discuss a divorce case in which Gregory has become involved. In Letter 144, he supports the decision of a young woman to remain married against the wishes of her obviously influential father, Veranius. Apparently, Veranius was offended by his son-in-law, and urged his daughter to sue him for a divorce. Gregory refused to rule in favor of the father, and wrote two letters, one to the Prefect, and one to the girl's father to explain his position.³⁴ In his letter to the town official, Gregory counsels restraint and justice for the young woman.

The young woman seems to be divided, as it were, for she is torn between reverence for her parents and affection for her husband. Her words are with her parents, but her thoughts, I feel, are with her husband, as her tears show. You will therefore, obviously do whatever comes into your mind because of your justice and because of God, who directs you in everything.³⁵

Despite the fact that the law would favor the father, Gregory sides with the girl, whose affections are divided between the loyalty she feels toward her parents and the love she obviously has toward her husband. In keeping with church tradition, which would favor the permanence of the marriage bond, and with his great sensitivity for the pastoral needs of individuals, in this case the young woman, he states that she should remain with her husband.

In another letter, this time written to Veranius, he justifies his position and seeks the father's understanding.

Even though I regard you most highly in every way, I do not

³³John Chrysostom, *Homily 5 on 1 Thessalonians* and *Homily 19 on 1 Corinthians*.

³⁴Charles Browne, Introduction to *Letters 144 and 145*, NPNF, 7, p. 480.

³⁵*Letter 144*, translated by Gerard Ettlinger, S.J. in "Gregory of Nazianzos: Rhetoric and Personality," pp. 103-04.

have the time, in order to indulge your friendship, to offend God to whom I owe an accounting for every action and thought. I shall believe your daughter, for the truth will come out, at that moment when she can be free of her fear of you and can speak the truth openly. At this moment her condition is pitiful, for she is divided, assigning her words to you and her tears to her husband.³⁶

While Gregory would like very much to remain in the good graces of the father, whom he obviously admires, he adheres to the Christian principle favoring the permanence of the marriage, and his belief that the young woman wishes to remain with her husband. In Letters 144 and 145, Gregory supports Christian marriages even in the face of obstacles.

The final genre of Gregory's writings which shall be examined for his views on marriage is his poetry,³⁷ where he exhibits a high degree of enthusiasm for the institution. Despite the fact that he shows a preference for consecrated virginity, he nonetheless praises the married life, describing it as a way of life which draws persons closer to God. His nuptial imagery is among the most beautiful in Christian antiquity, and stands as a reminder of Gregory's high regard for Christian marriage in general.

In the poem *De rebus suis* I.I.I, Gregory declares that marriage never attracted him. Despite this fact, he nonetheless calls it "that channel of life" and the "greatest bond that matter has forged for humankind."³⁸ This is consistent with the views of marriage already shown in his orations and in his correspondence regarding the young woman and her marriage. In other places in his poetry, Gregory praises the marriage of his parents.³⁹ His most powerful reference to marriage, however, occurs in his poem in praise of virginity, where he

³⁶Letter 145, trans. Gerard Ettlinger, S.J., in "Gregory of Nazianzos: Rhetoric and Personality," p. 104.

³⁷Denis Meehan points out that Gregory, the well-educated classicist, probably believed that it was very important to provide some Christian poetry for the world. Gregory's poetry stands as an important contribution to later writers, including, perhaps Augustine, whose *Confessions* may be modeled on *De vita sua*. See *Saint Gregory of Nazianzos: Three Poems*, in *Fathers of the Church* 5 (hereafter FC) (Washington, D.C., 1987), p. 20.

³⁸*De rebus suis* 2/1/1, 65, translated by Denis Meehan, O.S.B., in FTC 75, 27. See also J. Plagnieu, "St. Grégoire de Nazianze," pp. 115-30.

³⁹For example, see *De vita sua* 2.1.2, pp. 52-67.

exalts the beauty and dignity of both consecrated virginity and Christian marriage. In this poem, one can find some of the most beautiful and positive statements about marriage found anywhere in early church literature.

We whose concerns are the bonds of marriage and of life follow the law of human generation established by the Son of the eternal Father when he joined the first Adam to the woman drawn from his side, so that man might be born as the fruit of man. . . .

See what prudent marriages offer to the human race: Who has taught wisdom, sought the depths, the things on earth, in the sea, under the heavens? . . .

And there is still more. Those things that are higher are nobler by far. In our living together we are one another's hands, ears and feet. Marriage redoubles our strength, rejoices our friends, causes grief to our enemies. A common concern makes trials bearable. Common joys are all the happier, and accord makes riches more pleasant; it is even more delightful for riches without wealth. Marriage is the key of moderation and the harmony of desires, the seal of deep friendship. . . .

United in the flesh, one in the spirit, they urge each other on by the good of their mutual love. For marriage does not remove from God, but brings all the closer to him, for it is God alone who draws us to it.⁴⁰

In these stanzas, Gregory assumes the role of a married person as he attempts to speak from a married perspective. He clearly affirms that the law of marriage derives from God, which means that married persons live God's will through their marriages. He describes the many accomplishments of Christian marriage: it has populated the earth and has made the achievements of civilization possible. Gregory then writes expressively of the "nobler" joys of Christian marriage. Marriage increases a couple's strength by making sorrows

⁴⁰ *Carmen in laudem virginitate*, 223-77, PG 37.539-43, trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P., in *Beginning to Read the Fathers* (New York, 1985), pp. 138-39.

bearable and joys happier. A Christian marriage provides deep friendship and companionship for the couple, and provides spiritual riches to those who are materially poor.

Perhaps the most significant phrase of the poem, however, is the statement which is similar to *Oration* 40.18, where Gregory points out that marriage does not remove from God, but brings all the closer to him. Gregory, the celibate, who attested that marriage did not attract him, nonetheless appreciates that in the day to day living of the marriage relationship, persons find God. While others, such as John Chrysostom, have extolled some aspects of Christian marriage,⁴¹ no one is as forceful or eloquent as Gregory in his praise of the married Christian. Virtue and dignity belong to the Christian couple, and Gregory is an outstanding spokesperson for this unique view.

Conclusions

Gregory presents a rich and complex view of Christian marriage. He is influenced by many factors, including his close relationship with his family, his rhetorical education, which affects the style and the emphasis which is placed on many different elements of his teaching on marriage, and his innate sense of honesty and justice, which compel him to speak the truth, even if that means being unpopular on such issues as the role and rights of women in Christian marriage. Because of these factors, as well as his understanding of the theology of marriage, Gregory can declare that marriage brings couples closer to God in the enterprise of Christian life. Unlike so many other early Christian writers, who see the superiority of virginity only as it detracts from the institution of marriage, Gregory finds it possible to strike a balance between the two. Unlike Augustine, who is never comfortable with the tension between his insistence on the good of marriage and the view that virginity was the only real option for dedicated Christians, Gregory can set the two side by side and declare that both are good, and both are holy. While he is undoubtedly a person of his time and the product of a lifetime yearning for the contemplative life, Gregory the Theologian shows great respect for the institution that nurtured him on his own journey as a Christian.

Sadly, in the Western Church, Gregory's ability to assert the dignity and beauty of virginity and marriage together, and his outspoken statements on the equality of the persons in Christ and

⁴¹John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians*.

in marriage, did not find their way into other early church teaching. The task of theologians and historians today is to disseminate Gregory's positive contribution to the theology of Christian marriage, and to apply it to the life of Christianity today.



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Gregory the Theologian: Patriarch of Constantinople

GEORGE C. PAPADEMETRIOU

GREGORY WAS BORN ABOUT 329 OR 330 A.D. ON HIS FATHER'S ESTATE in Arianzos near Nazianzos, Cappadocia. His family was of the nobility. His father, Gregory the elder, was Bishop of Nazianzos. Earlier in his life, the elder Gregory espoused the religion Hipsistaria. This sect believed in one God and at the same time practiced beliefs and tenets of paganism and the Mosaic Law. Gregory's mother, Nonna, was a devoted Christian, and through her fervent prayer and prompting, she converted her husband to Christianity.

The younger Gregory had the advantage of the best education of his time. He attended primary school in Nazianzos and secondary education in Caesaria, Cappadocia. Here he may have met Basil for the first time. He furthered his education in rhetoric and philosophy at Caesaria in Palestine, Alexandria, and Athens. In Athens he studied under pagan and Christian teachers, and became closely associated with Basil with whom he remained a friend throughout his life. It was also in Athens that he met Julian the Apostate. He excelled in his studies and was persuaded to stay in Athens to teach rhetoric and philosophy. After two years, however, he gave up teaching and returned home to Arianzos in 361.

Upon his return home he was baptized and later his father ordained him a presbyter to assist him in the diocese. Shortly after he fled to Pontos. In 372 his friend Basil ordained him bishop for the insignificant town of Sassima. However, he never took up residence in this small and noisy town as its bishop because he did not want to play the political game of the bishops and took it as an insult to

be assigned to an insignificant diocese.

In 374, his parents died and Gregory left for Seleukia, a province of Isauria, where he stayed for five years and lived an ascetical life. In 379, he was invited by the Orthodox to Constantinople to preach the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. All the churches in Constantinople had been taken over by the Arians, except the small church of Saint Anastasia. Here Saint Gregory preached his famous orations on the Holy Trinity, which won him the title of "Theologian." At the capital Gregory worked not as Patriarch but as a missionary. Through his teaching and preaching, a large part of population of Arians returned to Orthodoxy.

When the Emperor Theodosios entered the capital city in triumph, he installed Gregory as Patriarch in the Church of the Holy Apostles. Emperor Theodosios convened the Second Ecumenical Synod in 381 to define the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Following the death of its president, Meletios of Antioch, Gregory was elected president of the synod. However, Gregory could not cope with the dynamics of the office and its politics. He was so frustrated by the rivalries of bishops that he was forced to resign. He returned to his estate in Arianzos, and there he spent the rest of his life. He died in 390-91.

Saint Gregory was a prolific writer, and the greatest rhetor of his time. Forty-five of his discourses survive to this day, and are an indication of the value he placed on rhetoric in the service of the Church. His most famous writings are the five Theological Orations (Nos. 27-31 of his *Theological Orations*), and the "Flight to Pontos," a treatise on the priesthood.

The five Theological Orations, delivered in Constantinople in 380, are among the best dogmatic works of the Church. The purpose of these discourses is to refute the Anomoians. More importantly, however, they articulate in a positive way the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Gregory's work against Julian is one of the best expressions of Christian apologetics that emphasizes the victory of divine wisdom over the wisdom of the world.

Gregory also wrote numerous works on the feasts of the Church. His sermon on Theophany (the Feast of Lights) develops the teaching of the Church on the creation of humankind as a mixture of rational and material, and the fall and the divine economy of the Incarnation. In this sermon, the inspiring of the Christmas canon, still chanted in the Orthodox Church, is as follows:

Christ is born, glorify him;
Christ comes from heaven, receive him;
Christ is on earth, be exalted.

In the sermon on Theophany, Gregory describes the purification of the faithful, and on the feast of Pentecost he indicates the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Gregory was the first to introduce into the Christian tradition the delivery of eulogies at funerals. These were the eulogies to Saint Basil, Saint Athanasios, and members of his family.

Of the numerous letters Gregory wrote to various friends and relatives, two hundred survive. He himself collected his letters and gave them to his nephew. In a cover letter to these, he gives the rules for good letter writing.

He also wrote many poems, epics, lamentations, and epigrams, didactic and lyrical in form, of which about four hundred are extant. His poems have influenced hymnographers, provided historical information, and given an expression of Christian existence and moral lifestyle.

The Theology of Saint Gregory

Gregory possessed a complete and accurate theology, which is followed by all subsequent Orthodox theologians. For him God is the cause of all existence, of the visible and invisible worlds. Gregory speaks of God as unknowable, because God transcends everything. All simple nature is either absolutely knowable or absolutely unknowable. God, simple as well as infinite, is inconceivable. It is impossible through human reason to attain knowledge of God's essence. The human mind is able to attain knowledge of God's existence, but not of God in his inner being.

Saint Gregory's teaching on the Holy Trinity has become the standard by which all subsequent Orthodox theological articulation on the Trinity must conform. God in his nature or divinity or essence is one, but three persons. Gregory absolutely denies that there are three gods, because the distinction is not referring to the divine essence but to the distinct characteristics of the hypostases. That is to say, the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. God is a true Trinity, whose persons are equal in every way. The Trinity has a common principle, a common essence, and a common power.

The three persons differ as follows in their hypostatic attributes: the Father is unoriginate and is the principle (*arche*) as cause and source and eternal light for all contingent beings; the Son, although not unoriginate, is the creative principle of all beings; and the Holy Spirit is the Person who proceeds from the Father alone. God is one in Trinity, that is, the Father is not the Son, neither is the Holy Spirit the Father or Son and vice versa.

God is the creator of all created beings because of his absolute goodness. God does not abandon his creation, but abides in all by his Divine Providence. The creation of the world is the act of all three persons. God created first the invisible powers, the functioning spirits, the intelligent world, and then he created the material and visible world, that is, heaven and earth and all that we see in them. The harmony and vastness of the world is a great witness to the Creator. The angels of various orders are functionaries of God's will.

The final creation is the human being (*anthropos*) from visible and invisible natures, that is, of body and soul. Gregory sees the Fall as a result of human freedom to choose. Death was allowed in order to end sin. In the history of humanity Gregory indicates that there were three stages: that of idolatry, that of the Torah, and that of the Incarnation. The final stage will be the *eschaton*.

It is interesting to note that in his discourse on "the prudent and divorce" he emphatically states his position. In the civil law of that time, in the marriage between man and woman, the husband and wife each have the same duties. However, the woman, in case of infidelity, is bitterly punished, whereas the man can fornicate with women without being responsible to the civil law. Gregory protests with an emphatic statement "No!" "I cannot," he says, "accept such legislation and I cannot praise such practice. The legislators of such laws were men and for that reason legislated against women." This is an excellent example of the concern by the Christian and loving pastor over the unjust laws of his day, which ignored the rights of women and often denigrated and abused them.

Saint Gregory the Theologian speaks of Greek philosophy as a shadow of the truth. Although he sees a deep conflict between Christian theology and Greek philosophy, he makes an attempt to reconcile the two systems.

The Theologian speaks of the cultivation of virtue as a way to perfection. The highest virtue is love. It is important to develop the harmony of virtue as theory and practice.

Saint Gregory the Theologian has been and remains the “standard bearer” of the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the theologian *par excellence* of the Orthodox Church.

Two points need amplification: first, the year of his death, and second, the titles “Theologian” and “Patriarch of Constantinople.”

Most scholars indicate that Saint Gregory died 389 or 390. However, Professors Panagiotes Chrestou¹ and Donald Winslow² indicate the year of Gregory’s death as 391. Professor Chrestou gives the following reason. According to the Byzantine Tradition preserved by the witness of Suidas, Gregory died in the thirteenth year of the reign of Emperor Theodosios, that is, 391. For practical reasons the faculty at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology decided to celebrate this occasion now as part of the Patriarch Athenagoras Memorial Lectures.

The second point is that of Gregory’s title: it is not “Nazianzos” for the following reason. As I pointed above, all of us know his father was Bishop of Nazianzos. According to Professor Panagiotes Chrestou, “Nazianzos” or “Nanzianzen” was given to Gregory as a title by the West to denigrate him. He states that:

On this point, it is worth mentioning a marginal but interesting result of that old displeasure of the West against Saint Gregory. He is constantly called Nazianzenos without any reason. As it is well known, distinguished persons are surnamed in Latin with an adjective from the city of their origin, or if they are bishops, of their episcopal see. To give Gregory the surname Nazianzenos is unjustifiable and groundless, since he neither came from Nazianzos, nor served as bishop of that town. He came from Arianzos and became Bishop of Constantinople. His father, also named Grēgory, was Bishop of Nazianzos for fifty years, and it is he who deserves to be named Nazianzenos, as, indeed, he is so recorded in ancient Eastern sources. The following question is very natural: Why did Westerners give Gregory a name which was not his? They gave him that name, because otherwise they would have to call him Constantinopolitanus; a name which they never ascribed to him, be-

¹ See Panagiotes Chrestou, “Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος,” *Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυλογαδεία* 4 (1964), 709.

² See Donald Winslow, “Gregory of Nazianzus,” *Encyclopedia of Religion* 6 (1987), 127.

cause they never recognized his ascent to that see. It was the Cynic who was for them Bishop of Constantinople in those days. In the East there was no problem of a surname for him, since he was very early given the title ‘Theologos,’ which was an extremely honorable title during that time, and which many modern scholars have consistently ignored.³

The hymn of the Church calls Gregory “the most exalted mind of theology,” and so it is fitting to have this conference in his honor.

On behalf of His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, Bishop Methodios, President of Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and Fr. Alkiviadis Calivas, Dean, I welcome all of you to the campus of Hellenic College/Holy Cross. I hope your participation in the conference will be intellectually stimulating and spiritually edifying. The School has exerted every effort to make your stay a pleasant one.

Special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. George Condakes for funding the Patriarch Athenagoras Lectures in memory of their father, Peter Condakes, making this conference possible.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all the speakers for their contributions.

³ Panagiotes Chrestou, “The Ecumenical Character of the First Synod of Constantinople, 381,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27 (1982) 366.



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Gregory the Theologian and Other Religions

FREDERICK W. NORRIS

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IS ONE OF THE TOPICS THAT DOMINATES THE Christian missionary theory of our era. It has led a number of missiologists to jettison the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as if in important ways such pluralism is a remarkably new feature for Christian mission. We may sense that it is a more urgent global concern than it was in previous centuries because earlier Christian theologians did not grasp the extent of our globe or know in detail some of the great world religions from India and China. Yet any of the insistent claims about the "newness" of pluralism must be carefully nuanced by our memories of the attitudes and approaches to other religions taken by early Christian leaders. This holds true whether we are investigating literature within Scripture or from church history.

Students of the patristic period often think of Gregory the Theologian as one of the great lights of the fourth century, an era in which Christianity was maturing to the point of producing a golden age. There are a number of reasons for calling Gregory the Theologian, ones that point up what should be unitive features of various Christian traditions found within our modern world. That is particularly the case if we focus our attention on his understanding of religious pluralism. Indeed, a closer look at Gregory's views of other religions reminds us of the complexity that his religious context presented. Gregory did not grow up in an isolated Christian family for whom the concerns of Greek religions or Judaism were basically superfluous. His father's family, the paternal grandparents, belonged to the Hypsistarii, a sometimes forgotten sect that Gregory himself describes as "a mixture of Hellenic error and Jewish legal fantasy." Its members

worshiped one God, who was referred to as the Almighty rather than the Father. Fire and lamps were important symbols in their liturgy. They observed the Jewish Sabbath and a number of the Levitical food laws, but rejected circumcision.¹ When the elder Gregory, the Theologian's father, became a Christian through the witness of his wife, Nonna, his mother disowned him. Relationships may have been repaired in later life during the time when the younger Gregory would have been a child in the family, but it is unlikely that Gregory grew up without a deep sense of religious pluralism. It had been such an important feature of his own household and extended family.

The Jewish character of the Hypsistarii may be one of the reasons that the Theologian found Judaism wanting. He also noticed that Arianism both in its insistence that the Son of God was less fully divine and in its literalistic reading of Scripture was following Jewish errors. There were a series of causes behind his scathing rebuke of Julian's attempt to revive pagan religions within the empire, but one of them was that Julian tried to have the temple in Jerusalem rebuilt. From Gregory's perspective that was an effort to reverse the judgment of God on Jewish tradition. Indeed Gregory can be abrupt enough to insist that there are three types of deformity in the doctrine of God: atheism with no god, Judaism with a strict monotheism that rules out the Trinity and polytheism with its pluralism that destroys divine monarchy.²

By receiving his education not only in somewhat backward Cappadocian Caesarea, but also in Palestinian Caesarea, Alexandria, and Athens within rather standard schools devoted to Greek learning and culture, Gregory became even more aware of religious pluralism. In each center of learning the Theologian usually found either a gifted Christian teacher or some Christian fellow students: at Cappadocian Caesarea, Karterios taught him well;³ at Palestinian Caesarea, Euzoios who later became the Arian bishop of the city studied with Gregory;⁴

¹ *Or. 18.5*, PG 35.989B-92B sets out most of these features. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomios* 2.5, Jaeger 2.327 offers some of the others. The reference in *Or. 8.4*, PG 35.793B to Gregory the Elder and idols does not necessarily mean that the Hypsistarii worshipped Hellenistic idols or that Gregory the Elder's family was at some time involved in such ceremonies. The phrase is a poetic comparison of Gregory's mother and father to Abraham and Sarah.

² *Ors. 2.36-37*, PG 35.444B-45B; 5.3-4, PG 35.665C-69B and 41.17, PG 36.452A-B.

³ *Epitaphia* 142-46. *Anth. Pal.* 2.463-65.

⁴ Jerome, *De vir.* 3. 113, PL 23.707A

at Alexandria, Gregory may have sat under Athanasios or Didymos the Blind; at Athens Prohairesios guided him in rhetoric and shared his faith.⁵ The Theologian, however, did not avoid the teaching of pagans. Part of his training in rhetoric and philosophy was undertaken with non-Christian teachers. In Palestinian Caesarea Thespesios was his guide in rhetoric.⁶ In Athens his other named tutor, Himerios, was no Christian. And Himerios taught Gregory much about rhetoric and some points about the logical use of enthymemes, the form of argument that he used so well in his refutation of the Arians.⁷ The significant connection for the concerns of this paper is that he had to read the different Hellenistic religious myths, which he eventually knew relatively well, under the tutelage of those who took them with various levels of seriousness. This personal experience seems to have been every bit as important to him when he mounted his attacks on other religions as the Christian apologetic tradition upon which he depended. The Theologian probably knew of Clement of Alexandria's *Protreptikos*; he certainly used other writings from Clement. He knew Origen's *Contra Celsum* for it is quoted in the *Philokalia*, which most scholars attribute to his work with Basil.⁸ But the specific aspects of other religions that he attacks are not to be found entirely in either the work of Clement or that of Origen.⁹

Gregory insisted that Athens itself was a center of pagan learning,

⁵ Socrates, *H. E.* 4.26, PG 67.529A. Sozomenos, *H. E.* 6.17, PG 67.1333C.

⁶ Jerome, *De vir.* 3. 113, PL 23.707A.

⁷ Socrates, *H. E.* 4.26, PG 67.529A. Sozomenos, *H. E.* 6.17, PG 67.1333C. Eunapios, *The Lives of the Sophists* 95, gives some details about Himerios' life. George Kennedy, *A History of Rhetoric, Vol. 3: Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 141-49, describes Himerios' skill in using enthymemes. See *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*, intro. and comm. by Frederick W. Norris, trans. Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams (Leiden, 1991), particularly pp. 17-39 for a discussion of the relationship of theology, rhetoric and philosophy in Gregory's *Theological Orations*.

⁸ See Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, pp. 99, 118-19.

⁹ Even a cursory look at the indices of Clement's *Protreptikos*, and Origen's *Contra Celsum* shows that although those two dealt with many more pagan legends than the selections made for the article, they do not cover every god or goddess which Gregory attacks. I have not selected every passage in which the Theologian indicates his rejection of other religions, only those in which he provides a longer list and thus a clear sense of his attitude and approach. Elias of Crete's commentaries on Gregory's orations are filled with explanations of the various pagan myths that the Theologian attacks. See J. Leunclavius, *Gregorius Nazianzenus, Operum tomii tres, Aucti nunc primum Caesareii, Eliae Cretensis Episcopi, et ipsius Gregorii librorum aliquot accessione* (Basil, 1571).

one that led many a Christian down the path toward idolatry. At the very least Christian students such as he and Basil were encouraged to forsake their central value of pursuing virtue, of being and being called Christians rather than by any other name. Like all other students they were assailed with banquets, theaters and feasts. They also were confronted with the moral principles involved in the pursuit of power through improper advantage. After all, Gyges' ring allowed him to rule Lydia and Midas' accumulation of gold offered much before their decisions undid them. The Hyperborean Abaris flew over the earth on his arrow and the Argive rode Pegasos. The first two legends led to worldly enslavements while the last two could not compare to Christian spirituality with its promise of rising to God with other faithful believers.¹⁰ The obvious observation that other people followed such legends and worshiped other gods was part of the fiber of the Theologian's educational life.

Gregory developed a general theology of religion in order to explain the plurality of what he saw in paganism. For him every rational being longs for God, for the first cause, but is unable to conceive of let alone speak of so wondrous an incorporeal nature. That longing sometimes can look out on th world of visible things in its order and beauty and from that can be led to imagine part of what the nature of its Creator might be. It is possible to look on nature and not lose God in the magnificence of his creation. But often in their painful and impatient desire for God, humans have taken the visible, material things of this world and turned them into gods. Thus some have worshiped the sun, moon, stars, or the heavens. Others have given their devotion to earth, air, water, or fire because without them human life does not exist. Some idolize anything of beauty while others adore pictures and images, even their own ancestors after enough time has passed so that the present worshipers do not remember that their gods formerly were only human beings.

Still others have given full allegiance to their own passions, raising anger and bloodthirstiness, lust and drunkenness, nearly every imaginable wickedness to the level of a god. In doing that they have ended up worshiping beasts, even monsters, and have sacrificed to them both animals and people. The Evil One himself has been behind this for he has taken the deep desire of humans for God, a good thing, and has turned it against their rational natures so that they have been

¹⁰Or. 43.21, PG 36.524A-C.

destroyed.¹¹

Thus for the Theologian a large part of pagan religions is best described as delusion brought about by Satan to enslave human kind. Knowing the myths and having at least talked with those who were involved in pagan worship, he had no compunctions against a scorching polemic focused on the Greek gods.

Gregory thought his own theology of pagan religions agreed not only with what Christian leaders had said but also with the way in which a number of Greek theologians themselves understood their heritage. The relationship with Euhemerism is clear: some gods are only men whose humanity has been forgotten. Furthermore, the Theologian uses the Greeks' descriptions of the daimons they worship to make his case for him. The Greek gods as described by their theologians are ruled by passions: they are factious, replete with change and evil. They not only oppose each other but also rebel against what they see as their own first causes: Okeanos, Tethys, Phanes, and those given other names. Their god Kronos gobbled up his own children when he was told that one of them would stand against him. No wonder that some of the leading Greek philosophers or theologians seek to take these tales as myths and fables, so that the utter shameful ness of the stories might be avoided by careful allegorical interpretation.¹²

That, however, will not do. If the tales of their gods are true then they should not be hidden in myths, but proved not to be so shameful. If the tales are not true, then people should cease giving these gods honor until they know what they really are. Their mysteries are full of dishonor. Zeus himself may have been a Cretan tyrant whose humanity has been forgotten. Even within one of the stories of his birth, the great Olympian Zeus is protected from his father Kronos, who tried to eat all his children, only when his mother Rhea rushed to his aid. Yet this apparently protective mother is worshipped in Phrygia through wild orgies led by the Corybantes, her priests. The ceremonies include various mutilations, one that the participants try to put out of their minds by listening to flutes played to lessen the pain.

The tales of Persephone and Demeter are too lascivious to repeat in a Christian gathering. The first was raped and the second, making her way through the world in a wagon drawn by dragons, was intimate

¹¹ *Or. 28.13-15, PG 36.41C-45C.*

¹² *Or. 31.16, PG 36.149C-52B.*

with Keleos and Triptolemos. The same is true of the Eleusian mysteries. The drunkenness of Dionysian festivals, the whoring worship of Aphrodite, the unspeakable sexual festivals of the Phalli and the Ithyphalli should alert anyone to their immorality. The tales concerning Taurian massacres of strangers and the self-mutilation of Laconian youths in the adoration of their virgin goddess, Artemis, do not impress anyone with their sense of morality.

What is one to make of Tantalos boiling his own son, Pelops, as food for the gods when they visited his home, and Demeter even eating part of his shoulder before they brought him back to life? The gods are depicted as having strange power in that they can raise Pelops from the dead, but they must make him an ivory shoulder to replace the one Demeter consumed. Similar horrors are said to have been part of the worship of Hecate or the sorceries of Trophonios. What kinds of prophecies came from the Dodonaean Oak, the Delphian tripod, or the Castalian springs? The Persian Magi read entrails and the Chaldeans pour over astrological charts and horoscopes but none of them know anything about the future.

Gregory understands that the Greek word for worship, *threskeia*, is said to come from Thracian orgies. The mysteries of Orpheus, the tortures of Mithra, the manglings of Osiris, the bad fortune of Isis, the goats of the Mendesians, the stall of Apis, the bull worshiped at Memphis, even the adoration of the Nile itself are made known by their ravaging immorality. None of these compare with the mystery of Christ. Neither do their leaders show the ascetic power and virtue of the Christian monks who have forsaken this world for the next.¹³

The Theologian is clearly aware of the power that these false religions have over the minds and hearts of people in his world. He warns his Christian audience that those who worship other gods will hear Christian discussions of the Son being begotten by the Father in terms of their own myths. Their gods conceive children not only through lying with women as men do, but even through rape and undisciplined desire. One male god is also described as carrying children in his thigh and birthing them from it. Christians need to be quite careful before whom they discuss their theology because talk

¹³ *Ors.* 4.70-72, PG 35.589C-97A; 39.3-6, PG 36.336C-41A. *Or.* 34.5, PG 36.245A praises the Egyptians for turning from Mendesian goats, the Memphian Apis bull, the mutilations of Osiris and the log Serapis. *Or.* 30.19, PG 36.128B-C has a reference to the legend that while Jesus was in Egypt as an infant, all the statues of the great Egyptian gods fell down and worshiped him.

of “begotten” and “unbegotten” will be so easily misunderstood by those whose thought and speech is filled with tales of such gods.¹⁴

Gregory’s anger at paganism is most evident in his two invectives against Julian where he berates the emperor and what he stands for in the most scathing comments of his corpus.¹⁵ In another oration he notes that the destruction of the Temple of Fortune in Cappadocian Caesarea led Julian to try to undo the election of Basil to the bishopric of the city.¹⁶ My suggestion is that these orations show not only his sense of pluralism—people do worship other gods—but also his own fear and frustration that Christian mission is not always as effective as it should be, that a recently established and protected religion can be in danger of losing the battle for people’s affections and certainly the battle for political recognition. None should assume that these depraved religions do not have power and could not again gain ascendancy.

After reading the invectives against Julian, we might expect that the Theologian would be totally exclusive in his sense of what is true in religion, perhaps so concerned about syncretism that he would always be on guard about taking over any aspects of Graeco-Roman religious culture. To a degree that is correct. For Gregory, Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, the only one. Considered as total structures of belief, there is no comparison between Christianity and other religions. Yet it is also the case that the Theologian can and does praise certain features of paganism. He thinks that its understanding of secrecy is appropriate for divine actions. He chides Christians for not being more tight-lipped about their mysteries; the pagans keep knowledge of their blasphemies quiet and share them only with their initiates. They do not degrade their mysteries by discussing them before any audience on any occasion and thus allow them to become common fare on street corners, in the baths, even in the salons of women.¹⁷

He also notices that various pagan believers have a sense of what is correct in worship and conduct. They can honor a man who stood a whole day motionless in the sun offering it his devotion, or another

¹⁴Or. 27.2, PG 36.13A-C.

¹⁵Ors. 4 and 5, PG 35.532A-720A.

¹⁶Or. 18.34, PG 35.1029B-32A.

¹⁷Or. 27.2, PG 36.13A-C.

who at Potidea spent the whole of a winter's night in such deep contemplation that he did not even feel the frost. It was indeed a great man who in the midst of a storm at sea threw all of his goods overboard and thanked Fortune for returning him to a single cloak.¹⁸ In a poem against anger, Gregory mentions a number of pagans who have found ways to avoid what that vice brings, ways that any Christian could also follow.¹⁹ All these attitudes are praiseworthy.

Gregory's biting wit also reveals ways in which he views the Greek religious heritage both positively and negatively. On the one hand he can ridicule the pagan view of Zeus and other gods by using some major titles given to them when he describes the honored Athanasios.²⁰ As we have seen above, he warned that these Greek deities arose from different sources and had a plethora of vices. On the other hand, he clearly sees that the better titles for Zeus are indeed virtuous and can be used by Christians with no sense of compromise. The higher aspects of the Greek gods are good indeed. Here lies a clever victory in ascribing their higher epithets to the virtuous Athanasios. Christians have their own heroes who embody the good which is found in Greek deities. Were Zeus and his cohorts as virtuous as their titles indicate, they would be much more worthy opponents. As it stands, they can be outdone by Christian saints. Yet their finest and highest titles, also of good repute, can only be used of God himself.²¹ Had the Greeks recognized that truth they would have seen their own religion and the verities spoken by their philosopher/theologians in a proper light.

The Theologian finds other truths in religions around him, particularly within the teachings of those we see as philosophers, perhaps at times as philosophers of religion, and he views as the most competent theologians of Greek religion. Yet his acceptance of values from Greek philosophy is selective. He abhors Socrates' love of boys which the famous teacher tries to hide as a love of beauty; Plato is no better because he does not stand against such misdirected affection. Indeed his own gluttony which led to his sale as a slave is certainly not honorable conduct. Cynics are often greedy and vulgar; Stoics

¹⁸ *Or. 4.72*, PG 35.593C-97A.

¹⁹ *Adversus iran*, *Carm. 1.2.25*, 253-303, PG 37.831-34.

²⁰ *Or. 21.36*, PG 35.1125B-28A.

²¹ *Carm. 1.1.9.3*, PG 37, 457 calls God *hypsimedon*, "the high-ruling, reigning on high," a term used by Hesiod *Theogony* 529 and Aristophanes *Clouds* 563 of Zeus.

haughty. Pythagoreans turn their famous five-year period of silence into a pretentiousness that marks the masters and a false obedience that marks the students. Epicurus, in a way unworthy of philosophers, finds the only principle in life to be pleasure.

Aside from these lapses in moral conduct, the conceptions of some famous philosophers are also false. Plato's understanding of Ideas, his sense of reembodiment and the cycles of our souls, his epistemology of remembrance are all open to attack. The same is true of Aristotle's meager conception of providence, the reductionistic simplicity of his technical logic, his rejection of the immortality of the soul and his attempt to make humanity the center of all. Epicurus is basically an atheist, one who sees the final building blocks of the universe as atoms.²²

At the same time the Theologian can honor the truths which he finds in these philosophers, even their understanding of deity. He praises Plato and Aristotle for the way in which they describe God, descriptions which he finds both admirable and true when they say God is the "mind of the world" or the "external mind."²³ He claims that the more advanced among the Greek philosophers know that there is only one godhead and that the *Iliad* itself uses a sense of threeness among the gods that is a pale image of the Christian sense of Trinity. It speaks of distinct province and rank for the triad of gods it mentions and thus is not like the Christian Trinity, but it is in some ways an interesting analogy to that important truth of Christian revelation.²⁴ The Theologian also commends the statement of a philosopher whom he does not identify. That penetrating thinker asked what set all things in motion and leads their continued movement.²⁵ Gregory intended to collect such statements from reputable authorities in order to carry on discussions with both pagans and Christian heretics. He can quote the philosophers' criticisms of Greek religion in his attacks on what he views as "paganism," but he can also quote with praise some of their specific conceptions of God when he is involved in internal Christian debate.

Therefore, while making a case for exclusivism, i.e., that Christianity is the true philosophy for all peoples, and thus avoiding a sense

²²*Ors.* 4.72, PG 35.593C-97A and 27.10, PG 36.24B-C.

²³*Or.* 31.5, PG 36.137B-D.

²⁴*Or.* 31.15-16, PG 36.149B-52B. *Iliad* 15.189.

²⁵*Or.* 28.16, PG 36.48A-B.

of each religion providing its own true way of salvation, Gregory follows an approach similar to that of Scripture. He does not have the deep feelings of sorrow that Jesus and Paul evidenced for Jews who did not claim Jesus as their Messiah, but his remarks do not represent a rabid Anti-Semitism. He finds their scriptures full of truths which he makes his own.²⁶ The bulk of his writings are marked by a polemic against false gods from other peoples, but he claims truth where he finds it. He uses methods for discerning the truth which are taken from his culture. For Gregory, Greek rhetoric and philosophy, when appropriately understood and employed, enhance worship or prayer.²⁷ He stands in a line with Paul's Areopagos sermon in which the insights of some pagan philosophers are claimed and yet the resurrected Lord is preached.

That line is still an important one for contemporary Christian mission. We must expect to find truth outside Christian faith at the same time that we refuse false gods. In the Theologian's view, we must continue to worship, confess, and witness to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as the trinitarian God along side of whom there is no other. In that way Gregory once again proves to be *the Theologian* not only for those whose tradition is Eastern Orthodoxy, but also for those whose heritage is Christian in every region and in every age.²⁸

²⁶In *Carm.* 1.1.10, 11, PG 37.466, Gregory does refer to the Jews as those with "God-murdering hands." That is the kind of language that modern Christians have correctly rejected. Yet it is not a phrase which totally dominates the Theologian's talk about Judaism. In *Carm.* 1.1.9, 25-33, PG 37.459, he speaks of Judaism's failing as dishonoring the law. The language is pastoral, based on *Romans* 9-11, and encourages Christians to live the faith so that Jews may return to their calling. Gregory does not suggest that they will be well served in Judaism, but that Christians should deal with them pastorally. In *Carm.* 2.1.6, PG 37.1544ff., a similar scathing phrase reappears, but even then the harshest words are for Christians. The "Christ-slaying hatred" of Israel is notorious and was a cause of division among them, but the hatred that now separates Christians into various divided bodies is far worse.

In a context in which vitriolic invective directed at opponents was a part of educated rhetorical strategy, the Theologian's remarks against Judaism are tame compared to what he says about Julian's paganism or Christianity's heresies.

²⁷See Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*.

²⁸I am particularly grateful for comments made at the conference and in a letter written to me afterward by Peter Gilbert. His knowledge of the Theologian's poetry has enhanced my treatment of this topic.



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helpful, outline of appropriate responses and limited suggestions of specific things that Christians can and must do to help cure the environment crisis. According to Campolo, local churches must be "role models of biblically prescribed discipleship in relationship to the environment" (p. 152). "Green Christians" is a term used by Campolo to designate individuals whose concern for the environment arises out of such biblical imperatives. While the author warns that it would be a mistake for the Church as a whole to identify itself with any political party, he nonetheless, includes a few suggestions that "individual" Christians can consider implementing in the political arena to help society become more environmentally faithful. Throughout this section, Campolo continually insists that spirituality and creation-care should always be "tied together" (p. 187). Being Christian, he asserts, requires that we "think globally but act logically" (p. 167).

Fortunately, according to Campolo, there are signs that the Christian community is slowly becoming concerned with the environmental crisis. The self-proposed arrogance that man is the "measure of all things" is slowly being eclipsed by a different kind of knowledge, a Scriptural approach to nature that recognizes that there is something more to the universe than meets the eye. In the final analysis, Campolo wisely concludes his book by rightly pointing his finger at man's sinful nature as the "real cause of the problem" (p. 32). It is man's inner greed and his selfishness that makes him "unwilling to adopt a more socially and environmentally responsible lifestyle."

Repentance, therefore, rather than recrimination is the beginning of the answer to the environmental crisis. Quoting Pope John Paul 2, Campolo underscores the view that the Church must usher in a new epoch of stewardship in which, "the Kingdom of God might be expressed through the saving of creation from destruction" (p. 33). What is needed, therefore, is a theological prescribed cure to our environmental problems which, according to the author, is the best hope for the future.

Frank Marangos
Saint Mark Greek Orthodox Church

Constantine Cavarnos. *Guide to Byzantine Iconography. Volume 1*
Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1993. Pp. 263.

The present volume on Byzantine iconography by Professor Cavarnos is a great contribution to the witness of Orthodoxy in the western hemisphere. Dr. Cavarnos, a professor of philosophy with deep faith steeped in the rich Orthodox Christian tradition writes in a classical way about the distinctive characteristics of Byzantine iconography. This volume is also a guide to the pattern of decorating Orthodox Christian Churches with panel icons, wall paintings, and mosaics.

The author discusses Byzantine iconography as a sacred art and describes its history, themes, the way of portraying persons, garments and objects, and the aesthetics of icons. Also given are detailed explanations of iconography in relation to the doctrinal, liturgical, and festal meaning of holy icons. Included is the concise systematic exposition of Saint John Damascene on the defense of holy icons. The volume includes numerous illustrations and relates where each icon appropriately belongs according to reasons explained from the long and rich tradition of the Orthodox Church. This is an impressive volume that enlightens the readers with the inner richness of Christian Orthodox iconography.

This volume is a necessary acquisition for those interested in investigating where icons and biblical scenes belong in the church structure. The book is important too for every Orthodox Christian to read the volume in order better to understand the function and meaning of icons. Also included are a useful bibliography, numerous references to the Church Fathers and modern writers on iconography.

I highly recommend this excellent volume to Orthodox and non-Orthodox, and to scholars and the general public, alike.

George C. Papademetriou

Constantine Cavarnos. *Modern Orthodox Saints. Volume 11. Blessed Elder Philotheos Zervakos*. Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1993. Pp. 240.

The Elder Philotheos Zervakos (1884-1980) was one of the most astute modern Orthodox Christian personages. Professor Cavarnos vividly portrays this remarkable spiritual guide and vigorous defender of Orthodoxy.

The author begins his book by relating his personal experience with Elder Philotheos and includes valuable conversations and cor-



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practice of hospitality—even by those who were most concerned to emphasize the importance of prayer and hesychia.

What comes at the end as the overall conclusion, is that the Desert Fathers saw community as an integral part of their monastic ideal and rarely regarded solitude as a way of life to be pursued at the expense of community.

The author has a very good command of primary and secondary sources. Thus, the book is well documented, including a helpful bibliography and index.

I recommend without reservation the addition of this book to the resources for studying the life and the theology of the Desert Fathers. It is a part of a very interesting series *The Oxford Early Christian Studies*, which includes scholarly volumes on the thought and history of the early Christian centuries. Covering a wide range of Greek, Latin and Oriental sources, the books of the series are of great interest to theologians, ancient historians, and specialists in the classical and Jewish words.

Christos B. Christakis
King's College, London

Tony Campolo, *How to Rescue the World Without Worshiping Nature* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992). Pp. 213.

How to Rescue the World Without Worshiping Nature is an insightful book written by Dr. Tony Campolo, the noted best-selling author, speaker, professor of sociology at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pennsylvania and director of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education. The volume is divided into 14 chapters which generally examine: (1) the origin of the environmental crises, (2) an analysis of the Church's failure to address it, (3) a "theology" of Christian environmental responsibility and finally, (4) a number of practical ways that the contemporary Church can involve itself in, what the author calls, "creation-care." A special section is also dedicated to the theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church and its implications on the contemporary environmental debate.

Underscoring the concerns of numerous Christian thinkers, Tony Campolo wrote his book to "add," as he insists, his voice to an increasing chorus which declares that "rescuing the environment...and ending the careless selfish lifestyle that brought us to this impen-

ding disaster is a Christian obligation" (pp. 5-6). Campolo defines the purpose of writing his book in terms of challenging the Church to (1) accept the responsibility of "rescuing" the environment as a biblical mandate, (2) suggest ways to end the careless selfish lifestyle that has produced the environmental situation, (3) begin to bridge the "gap" that now exists between many evangelicals and many environmentalists, and finally, to (4) realize that Christianity at its best "is environmentally responsible" (pp. 5-6). For the purpose of this review, I would like to examine a few selected chapters of Dr. Campolo's book against the backdrop of these four challenges.

In Chapter 3, entitled "Beating the Bum Rap," the author attempts to defend Protestant Christianity and, most specifically Calvin himself, against those who would place the blame of originating and fostering a utilitarian view of nature on him (p. 22). Campolo argues, yet somehow unsuccessfully, that Clavin had a more than a utilitarian view of nature. He insists that Calvin did not encourage the misuse of nature but, rather, urged individuals to be "good stewards" of God's creation.

Although the reader might share Campolo's enthusiasm to defend Calvin against those who would place the blame of environmental crisis on him , Campolo, however, does not allocate enough space to adequately exonerate the reformer's reputation. The author does, however, provide ample information to indite the "scientific approach to life", and more specifically Descartes as the "real culprit" of the environmental crisis.

Calling to the stand the testimonies of famous sociologists such as Max Weber and Erich Fromm, Campolo successfully exhorts us to accept the notion that science has alienated man from nature by extracting "sacredness" and "mystery" from it. Campolo effectively argues that the present environmental situation is not the product of Calvinist theology but the direct result of the Cartesian intellectual revolution.

Throughout his book, Campolo compares and contrasts empirical scientists, evangelical thinkers, sociologists and the writings of Christian mystics. In fact, the author dedicates the majority of Chapter 4 to what he calls "the largely untapped beliefs of the Eastern Orthodox Churches." In this fascinating chapter, Campolo examines the environmental implications of Eastern Orthodox theology.

According to Campolo, Orthodox ecclesiology has much to offer the environmental discussion. In the first place, Orthodox theology

affirms the existence of two kingdoms growing side by side. While it is true that Orthodoxy affirms that things are getting worse, the Kingdom of God is also growing. Buttressed by the message found in the Matthean parable of the tares, Orthodoxy claims that the Second Coming of Christ will doom the kingdom of darkness and inaugurate final renewal (p. 46). Nature, therefore, is in a period that Compolo likens to that which stood between D-Day and V-Day (p. 47).

Apart from rescuing man from eternal death, Orthodox theology insists that Jesus likewise, initiated the liberation of nature from the perversity of satan. For Orthodox Christians, salvation, therefore, is not as “human centered” as it is in the west. The glorification of God, rather not man, is the purpose of Christ’s work. According to Orthodox thought, therefore, worship is the ultimate meaning of salvation. What Jesus did and is still doing during this period between D-Day and V-Day is to transform the entire cosmos in such a way as to help it once gain worship Him. Campolo correctly asserts that the hope-filled theology of Eastern Orthodox Christians is, therefore, much needed today for it echoes the restoration and healing of the entire cosmos...the eschatological message of Isaiah 11.6-9.

Throughout his entire book, Compolo’s single-minded aim is to solidly set the task of “creation-care” within the context of Christian spirituality. The author speaker wants his readers to become passionately involved in the efforts of rescuing the environment by proving that such involvement is a spiritual and ecclesial mandate. Furthermore, he wants us to include the “suffering” and “deliverance” of creation from its bondage to evil (Rom 8.21) as part of our devotional life.

In Chapter 10, Campolo effectively describes the basis of such a devotional life as a “sacramental stewardship” of the environment. “I have become increasingly aware of the sacramental character of nature” he asserts, “and have come to realize that God’s creation is a special means of grace” (p. 124). Echoing Orthodox theology, Campolo describes nature as originally created to praise its Creator, to “magnify the Lord” and “bring honor to His Name.” According to Holy Scripture, however, sin perverted and lured man, as well as nature, away from its “high calling” (p. 129). Thanks to the work of the Incarnation, Campolo insists, creation still has a great capacity for “revelation and worship.” “Salvation,” insists Campolo, “has cosmic dimensions.” Hence, mankind has a choice to either become “partners” with satan and to continue to pollute and lead creation

away from God , or to join the “royal priesthood” which “frees” nature to join us in the worship of God (p. 131). Herein lies the real contribution of Campolo’s book. By utilizing the mystical theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Campolo has begun to peal back the skin of creation’s “worshiping capacity”, and has correctly pointed the environmentally concerned in a dynamic new direction (p. 127).

As we have seen, Chapter 10 describes the basis of Campolo’s “creation-care” theology. He exhorts us to “commit ourselves to creation-care...to commit ourselves to releasing creation from its distortions so that it can join us in worshiping God.” According to Campolo, worship is the concern and the motivation that should distinguish the Christian Church from other social action environmental groups which understand their movement in strictly human welfare terms.

Such groups, warns Campolo, are manifestations of anthropocentric exaggerations that understand nature as something that has been created simply to provide blessings, enjoyment and glorification to humans. The environmental motivation of worship, on the other hand, if clearly maintained, should protect the Church from entangling itself with the New Age Movement.

Throughout every chapter of his 213-page book, Campolo utilizes every opportunity to insure the separation of his thinking from any association with the “pop” religious thinking of the New Age Movement, which, he insists, has often “seduced” the environmentally concerned into its heretical clutches. In Chapter 13, Campolo argues most effectively against allowing the “New Age gurus” to “hijack” a movement that should belong to Christians! By raising, what he describes as four “red flag” areas of concern, Campolo cautions well-minded, yet unprepared, Christians against dialoguing with the “cultic world” of New Age thinking. Throughout the pages of each “red-flag” discussion, Campolo continually warns against any and all association with New Age environmental philosophies. Nonetheless, however dangerous the task, Campolo urges his readers not to “turn our backs on what is quickly becoming the most crucial issue of our time.” Quoting Saint Paul, Campolo concludes his book by insisting that regardless of the dangers of being “side-tracked” by New Age philosophy, the Christian Church must be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor 15.58)

The final chapters of Dr. Campolo’s book include a brief, yet

helpful, outline of appropriate responses and limited suggestions of specific things that Christians can and must do to help cure the environment crisis. According to Campolo, local churches must be "role models of biblically prescribed discipleship in relationship to the environment" (p. 152). "Green Christians" is a term used by Campolo to designate individuals whose concern for the environment arises out of such biblical imperatives. While the author warns that it would be a mistake for the Church as a whole to identify itself with any political party, he nonetheless, includes a few suggestions that "individual" Christians can consider implementing in the political arena to help society become more environmentally faithful. Throughout this section, Campolo continually insists that spirituality and creation-care should always be "tied together" (p. 187). Being Christian, he asserts, requires that we "think globally but act logically" (p. 167).

Fortunately, according to Campolo, there are signs that the Christian community is slowly becoming concerned with the environmental crisis. The self-proposed arrogance that man is the "measure of all things" is slowly being eclipsed by a different kind of knowledge, a Scriptural approach to nature that recognizes that there is something more to the universe than meets the eye. In the final analysis, Campolo wisely concludes his book by rightly pointing his finger at man's sinful nature as the "real cause of the problem" (p. 32). It is man's inner greed and his selfishness that makes him "unwilling to adopt a more socially and environmentally responsible lifestyle."

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Μιμισόμεθα Νόμον Θεοῦ: Gregory the Theologian's Ontology of Compassion

TASOS SARRIS MICHOPoulos

EQUALITY, AS FEW OTHER SUBJECTS, TOUCHES VIRTUALLY EVERY branch of human learning, reaching from end to end almost as does Wisdom itself.¹ The frontiers of reasonable surprise will remain unthreatened, then, at the suggestion that a study of this profound subject will put us in contact with several of the most diverse sectors of the thought of Gregory the Theologian. We shall be concerned in what follows with no more than a relatively restricted instantiation of this primacy of equality in Gregory's work. Here we have the chief formulator of the Church's teaching on *Trinitas Aequalis*.² When, moreover, Gregory finds that he must descend from the Trinity to take up the terrifying socio-economic problems of his day and locality, he once again turns to the notion of equality for the lynchpin of his doctrine of justice and compassion. It is perhaps this close correlation of theory to practice that inclines Gregory, throughout his teaching on human action, pervasively to appeal to the speculative science of being, the study which is sometimes called ontology.³ We

* Dedicated to the memory of Prof. Costas Prousis.

¹ The allusion is to Wis 8.1.

² See J. Plagnieux, *Saint Grégoire De Nazianze Théologien* (Paris, 1951), 441-44.

³ Ontology has a restrictive sense here, which one might refer to as its 'Cappadocian' sense. Ontology, taken in this understanding of it, is the envisionment of the things that exist, viewed in their ultimate rational unity and harmony, assuming the insurmountable fact that there are many substances in their unity and complementarity one with another. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera*, ed., Jaeger, 5, 406 (1-9), 411 (9)-412(19). This concept of ontology is opposed in important ways to that of M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Garden City, 1961), p. 34, and see R. Schurmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington,

are going, at any rate, to discover that even where his subject matter is moral, his language encloses recurring ontological themes of great sharpness and depth. This multiple intersection of theory and practice, of theology and ontology, will surface again and again in Gregory's remarkable teaching that the finest part of love is in imitating the mercy of God.⁴ A few introductory paragraphs on Origen's handling of social equality will assist in assigning to its appropriate setting Gregory's teaching on equality as the ontological root of compassion.

The Problem of Social Equality in Origen

Origen seems to have held that what we call the hypostasis of a given entity is necessarily the same as that entity's nature.⁵ The result of this teaching for the theology of the Trinity would, of course, be that there could not be a genuine distinction of utterly equal Persons in God. In consequence of this identification of nature and hypostasis, the distinct person of the Son would have to be constituted by the Son's having a nature that would in some sense be distinct from, hence less perfectly divine, than the nature of the Father. The Son would to that degree be subordinate to the Father.⁶

This same implied identity of nature and hypostasis seems to recur in the realm of the finite spirits that are inferior to the Son and the Holy Spirit. No finite entity of this sort would be intrinsically individuated by a body. The reason would simply be that the entity

1987), 142; M. E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation With Modernity* (Bloomington, 1990), p. 137-38.

⁴ On the theological activity of Gregory the Theologian, see the fundamental study of Plagnieux, *supra* n. 2. A splendid presentation by a contemporary Greek Orthodox writer is B. Tatakis, *The Contribution of Cappadocia To Christian Thought* (Athens, 1960, in Greek) chapter 5, esp. p. 158-86. For a broad interpretation, organizing the system of Gregory around the notion of *theosis*, see D. F. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, MA, 1979). A typically valuable general treatment is to be found in J. Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. 3 (Utrecht, 1963), 236-54.

⁵ See *Con. Cels.*, 8, 12: PG 11.1533B-C, along with the material assembled by G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London, 1964), pp. 189, 191-92, and by H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford, 1966), p. 92.

⁶ See, e.g., *Peri Arch.* 1, 3, PG 11.148C-51A. Origen's subordinationist bias is underscored by Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* 132-33, 249; by C. Bihlmeyer and H. Tüchle, *Histoire De L'Eglise* (Paris, 1969), I, p. 176; and by B. Altaner and A. Stuiber, *Patrologie* (Freiburg, 1966) 207.

itself, the individual hypostasis, being one and identical with the nature, would be fully constituted by the nature and so could exist without an individuating body.⁷ Origen seems to secure the numerical distinction of finite spirits by pegging differences of ontological actuality on varieties of ethical choice. For ethical reasons, according to Origen, each created spirit falls from righteousness.⁸ The evil choice is a primordial difference in a sense; but it is nonetheless an accidental one. The essential intrinsic ontological perfection of a given finite spirit remains to this extent unaffected by personal ethical choice.⁹

If we draw a line, in a manner in which Origen might have done, between the domain of all the finite spirits and the realm of the three divine Persons, we shall notice that there is an enormous difference between the two orders of reality on the score of the key feature of *equality*. Above the line, on the side of the divine Three, there would be inequality and extrinsic subordination. In the celebrated words of Origen's commentary on John, the Father is even more above the Son and the Spirit than they are themselves above creatures even the highest.¹⁰ Below the line, however, there is complete equality from the ontological point of view. Each finite spirit is, in degree of essential being, the absolute equal of all the others.

The trouble with this picture as a whole, however, is that it presents us with an all too sharp opposition between the equality of the social world of finite spirits and the stratified social relationships that seem for Origen to bind together the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

⁷ In *Peri Arch.*, 3, 1, 21, PG 11.297B, finite spirits are referred to as *Logikai hypostaseis* that have all been shaped by the Creator from a single matter. Seeing that they are distinguished uniquely by ethical choice, they cannot be individuated by their matter so that their hypostases would be irreducibly distinct from their nature.

⁸ The fall from righteousness is for Origen due to a certain surfeit and satiety which the particular spirit experiences in relation to the supreme good: *Peri Arch.*, ed., P. Koetschau, trans., G. W. Butterworth, Harper Torchb. ed. 17, 125, 130, cf. 39. E. V. Ivanka has attempted to establish a connection between Origen's doctrine of the fall of the spirits and the Heraclitean teaching of a reiterated state of satiety (*Koros*) occurring at certain moments in the existence of the world. V. Ivanka weakens his most interesting claim by failing to prove it and then referring back to it as a demonstrated conclusion: see his remarkable *Plato Christianus* (Einsiedeln, 1964) pp. 117-18, 124, 139.

⁹ The exclusive difference, according to Origen, of one finite spirit with respect to another is to be located either in praxis or in some aspect of praxis. See, e.g., *Peri Arch.*, PG 11.160B, 169B, 182B.

¹⁰ In *Joan*, PG 14.411B-C.

Yet the world of created Spirits is derivative to the world of the three divine Persons. We would expect rather that the equality of this *derivative* social world would arise from a divine plurality of *equal* Persons.

Tò Ὀμότιμον Ἰσότητι Τιμῶν

We are going to find that Gregory the Theologian is able to overcome this most undesirable break between the orders of divine and created spirit. Our attempt to indicate how Gregory accomplishes this will begin with his teaching concerning equality among human beings. It is a significant fact that Gregory does not separate his teaching on human equality from the socio-economic problem of the availability of goods. The principle from which he begins articulates the primordial relation which he finds between human nature and its ecosystem.¹¹ Gregory envisions this relationship as arising from the provident will of the Creator. The relationship is not, however, a simple order according to which the universe is subjected to human

¹¹*De Pauperum Amore*, PG 35.884A-C, 892B; see also 864C and 865B. The teaching of Gregory the Theologian and that of Gregory of Nyssa on socio-economic matters was forged under conditions of widespread poverty and social upheaval characteristic of the time and place of these two Masters. Along with the theologian's *De Pauperum Amore*, the reader is directed to the three magnificent discourses in Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera*, Jaeger, ed., 9, pp. 93-108, 111-27, and 195-207. It is sometimes maintained that during the epoch of the Cappadocians the cities were flourishing and the conditions in the rural areas were fundamentally sound (thus P. Petit, *Libanius Et La Vie Municipale A Antioche* (Paris, 1955), pp. 297, 303, 308, 312-13. It seems, at any rate, that the municipalities were on the verge of bankruptcy, and that the countrysides were swarming with refugees condemned 'to eke out a precarious existence by rapine and murder' (C. N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Oxford, 1944), 352-54). There were wars with the barbarians to the north (the imperial army under Valens was destroyed in 378) and with the Persians in the East (Julian meets the same mortal fate as Valens, this time in Persia in 363)—the atmosphere was one in which enemies might have been taken captive, later to be helplessly turned loose in the interior of the empire. There is an alarming flight from the countrysides to the cities (thus A. H. M. Jones, in A. Momigliano, ed., *Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 34-35), suggesting an extensive population. There existed a numerous swarm of pitifully rootless persons that were hungry, ill, sometimes dangerous (Cochrane, *Christianity and Culture*, 354; Petit, *Libanios*, pp. 222-23). And finally there is evidence that wealthy persons were able to buy up increasingly large domains and brutally dispossess the former owners (A. Momigliano, 'Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire,' in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity*, 8). Passages from Gregory the Theologian's *De Pauperum Amore* as well as from the sermons of Gregory of Nyssa mentioned above appreciably augment our understanding of the socio-economic conditions of the collapsing empire.

power and initiative. The relationship is a polyadic spread in which there is a large dose of dislocation and scarcity. We may be permitted to cite briefly a passage in which this complex order between humans and their world is emphasized:

Some things then are fluid and transitory, as is the case with playing the game of dice, which are thrown down and which come up at different times to the benefit of different persons. Nothing belongs so exclusively to the one whom things favor that it does not either come to a stop with time or become lost to him due to the envy of others. There is another class of things, however, which stand firm and remain; they never give way, they never fall from us, neither do they cheat the faith of those who believe in them. And it seems to me that none of the goods we encounter here below are either worthy of human faith or lasting in the span of their usefulness. And if anything can be said of this situation, it is that the present transient condition of things has been splendidly engineered by the creative Word and that Wisdom which exceeds every Mind, in order that we might be at play among these visible things which were once different and which now continue to change—things which are borne about and transformed above and below, and which depart and flee even before they are enjoyed. This all comes about in order that, contemplating things which are never at rest and which are so irregular, we might find our desire transferred to the world to come.¹²

Here we have a text in which Gregory defines the restraints that govern the order between human beings and their world. The fact with which Gregory begins is the unevenness of the observable condition, the socio-economic profile, of human beings.¹³ The enormous differences that divide us spring to a large extent from the joint influences of greed and the mere play of chance. We are immersed in the incessant interplay of these two great forces. The Creator would have us learn to turn our gaze away from this world of constantly changing human fortune to a world of things that never ‘cheat the

¹²De Paup. Am., 884A-B.

¹³Some of the afflictions which Gregory would regard as evocative of compassion are listed at PG 35.854C.

faith of those who believe in them.¹⁴ God has, as Gregory puts it, so engineered the shape of our existence that we are irrefutably taught to seek our best hope elsewhere than in this world.

Gregory evokes the spectacle of human suffering, the thought of which often moves him to tears,¹⁵ and he asks us what we—who bear the name of Christ and who mysteriously make up a royal priesthood—are going to do in the face of the universal anguish which surrounds us.¹⁶ How are we to respond to these brothers and sisters of ours who have been appointed to have the same nature and to bear the same divine image? ‘What are we to think of them?’ he asks. ‘What shall we do? Are we to despise them? Pass them by? Treat them as one would crawling things and wild beasts?’ Gregory gives a two-pronged answer. We must see Christ in these brothers and sisters of ours, and we must learn from the common nature which we share with them what compassion truly is. Indeed our very nature itself, he says, ‘has legislated [this] compassion, teaching us by our equality in weakness that we must couple virtue with the love of our fellows.’¹⁷

There is for Gregory a created mode of social plurality in which many individuals equally enjoy the possession of a common nature. This nature is, as we have seen, one in whose *weakness* we all share. It is, at the same time, a nature in whose *equality of honor* we all partake. The pervasive law of created equality in honor is described in this way by Gregory:

[God] graciously conferred air on the nature of winged things and water on things that live in the deep, and on all things the first beginnings of life. These beginnings were not constrained by power, nor were they encompassed by law, nor was their separation secured by threatening guardians of cosmic order. God rather made the most fruitful things those which

¹⁴For a somewhat similar estimate in Origen, see the remarks of H. Chadwick, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, England, 1967), p. 190.

¹⁵*De Paup. Am.*, PG et, 868C. This text, along with 869A, gives an enormously vivid picture of the profoundly dislocated economic situation of Gregory’s time and place; see also 874A-C. Compare this, moreover, with the description of the *koros*, the utter satiety, of the rich, *ibid.* 885A and 889A.

¹⁶*De Paup. Am.*, PG 35.874C.

¹⁷*Ibid.* 876C.

were primary, and He added in natures needful of nothing other than what the most fruitful ones could supply. God thereby honored the equal dignity of nature with the equality of His gift and manifested in this way the riches of His own benignity. . . .¹⁸

Such, then, is Gregory's master principle: equality is the veritable law of the natural world. It is to the imitation of this law of the Creator that we are called—this law of the God who rains upon the just and sinners, and who sends the sun to rise in one same way upon all. We may then say in summary that for Gregory our lot is that of enjoying an equality of weakness and of honor in a world of chance. This double equality arises from our very nature itself.¹⁹

Nothing Is so Necessary as Imitating God

The great machine of the world is ruled, in the thinking of Gregory, by the law of equality. The realization of this mandate in practice

¹⁸Ibid. 889C.

¹⁹For a lengthy depiction of the coupling of greatness and all-enveloping fragility proper to our race, see PG 35.865B-C. It might not be inappropriate to emphasize the distance that separates Gregory the Theologian's, and his Nyssan name-sake's, summons to compassion with a current of modern theological thought that runs from Hegel through Ernst Troeltsch down to the present. Hegel caustically rejects the large-scale value of beneficent acts that do not arise from the majestic efficacy of the state: see *The Phenomenology of Mind* (Harper Torchb. ed.), pp. 443-44. Troeltsch enlarges this judgment into the thesis that the social power inherent in Christianity did not reach its full stride (and indeed remained truncated and ineffectual) until the emergence of the modern (and largely Germanic) concept of state sovereignty: see *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (New York, 1931), pp. 86-89, 643, 645, 647, 1008-13. Troeltsch operates under the hardly disguised premise that prior to the twentieth century only the state could accomplish the social goals which Christian ethics has, at various stages of its development, held up for consideration and pursuit. The central problem for modern Christianity, he maintains, has been generated by an irrevocable turning away of the state from issues that are of intense significance to Christian conscience. This development, according to Troeltsch, deprives Christianity of the principal means of implementing the social consequences of its beliefs. Christianity, invested since Calvin with a world-shaping formula for marshalling the forces of productive change, is helpless without the state. The profound ambivalence of Troeltsch's position is witnessed by the fact that his patronage can be eagerly invoked by two so very different writers as the enthusiastically Christian Nicholas Wolterstorff and the no less enthusiastically atheist Michael Harrington. Neither of the two Cappadocian Gregories would have been so easily taken in, so easily duped into thinking that the social efficacy of the Christian religion could be contingent on an infusion into Christian practice of some dubious glimmer of the majesty and the coercive power of the state.

consists in a set of moral dispositions which we can group under the heading of compassion, a locution which is for Gregory a word of preference.²⁰

To understand how Gregory handles the notion of compassion, we must go back to his treatment of the origins of human inequality. It is Gregory's teaching that humans falsify the inner order of objects and indeed of the universe at large. We misread the ontological ground-plan on which the totality of creation is based.²¹ The moral life consists of the endeavor to arrive, in both theory and practice, at a correct inner orientation to the ruling law of equality, as it is embodied in the ontological structures of created entities. Compassion is an absolutely prime component of the program implicit in this inner orientation.²²

Consider the following text, in which Gregory describes how we tend to misread and misconstrue the intrinsic ontological tenor of our world:

Freedom and wealth come to us from the mere observance of the command; true poverty and enslavement come from the

²⁰For a sampling, see *De Paup. Am.*, PG 35.864B, 873C, 881B.

²¹*De Paup. Am.*, 884B-C, 892B.

²²Compassion is closely related in the thought of Gregory the Theologian to what he calls *eu poiein*, 'assistance to others,' as one might call it. It is that mode of action which inclines us to be generous (i.e., liberal) with others according to our power: PG 35.893A, cf. 976C-D. 'Assistance to others,' or *eu poiein*, is the subject of a whole homily by Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera*, Jaeger, 9, 93-108. The expression is not without Biblical roots: 'do well [εὖ ποιησον]', says Sirach, 'to the humble man' (12.5, see Heb 13.16). *eu poiein* and its cognates are also used with some frequency by Aristotle: *Ethic. Nic.*, A, 1, 1120a, 12 and 14; *Rhet.*, A, 9, 1366b, 15-16, A, 11, 1371a 34f, B, 2, 1379b 31, and B, 3, 1381a 19. In Aristotle's discussion of the virtue of liberality, *eu poiein* is a fundamental feature of the proper act of the *liberal* person, i.e., the act of giving of what one has according to one's power to give. Aristotle formulates the core of his teaching in this way: '... liberality resides not in the multitude of the gifts but in the state of character of the giver, and this is relative to the giver's substance. There is therefore nothing to prevent the man who gives less from being the more liberal man, if he has less to give': *Ethic. Nic.*, A, 1, 1120b 7-11. Compare the following from Gregory: 'Your gift will not be small to some person who has nothing at all, nor will it be small in God's eyes if you give according to your ability. Instead of something big, give the gift of anxious concern; if you have nothing to give, shed at least a tear. . . .' PG 35.896B, cf. 893B-C. For both Gregory and the philosopher, the work of virtue is to give as one is able. A dozen lines further on, Gregory virtually quotes the very text of the *Nicomachean Ethics* A, 1, 1120a 12, saying with Aristotle that we are called to the act of *eu poiein* and not to a mere *eu paschein*: PG 35.896C.

law's transgression. From transgression, too, arise jealousies, squabbles and the crafty tyranny of the serpent enforcing its perpetual downward pull by means of our greed for pleasure and enticing the more bold against the weaker among us. That which is one nature (*τὸ συγγενές*) is torn apart by the use of opposed names, and the desire for gain cuts to pieces that which is gracious to nature, dragging along in its rush the law itself, the very shield against the abuse of power. Set your vision, I charge you, rather on that initial equality of law than on the subsequent splitting up. Look not to the law of the transitory Master, but rather to the law of the Creator.²³

What then must be our course of action? The creation of a deceptively divisive language coupled with avarice obstructs the inner drive of our nature for an equitable sharing of the goods of our world. We must restore the original unity; we must act in accordance with that equality with which our nature was initially endowed. We must seek the ontological root of action in that law of the Creator according to the precept of which we are all equal. The effort to correct our false assessment must take the form of a gathering together, a bringing back to unity, of things which our false judgment has put asunder. We must formulate a new estimate in which what we have regarded as dispersed and unequal is now envisioned as being equal in weakness and honor in a world of chance.²⁴

What is called for, Gregory tells us, is that we 'become god to the unfortunate and that we imitate the mercy of God.'²⁵ This mandate is honored in the practice of compassion. In imitating the mercy

²³ *De Paup. Am.*, PG 35.892B.

²⁴ Gregory terminates a lengthy protest against indefensible acquisitiveness with the admonition that we must not mingle our wealth with the tears of others—we must not, he says, 'place so great a distance between ourselves and the divine equality' (PG 35.1056C). Here inequality of earthly goods is sharply and unfavorably contrasted to the equality which is proper to God. When we ask ourselves what this divine equality might be, we will find Gregory answering that he would confess a God whose divinity is 'equal from every aspect, the same from every aspect. . . . an infinity that is a natural unity of three infinites, each of them envisioned in virtue of Itself to be God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. . . .' (*Or. 40*, PG 36.417B). See also in the same sense, *Or. 18*, PG 35.1005A; *Or. 23*, PG 35.1161B-C; *Or. 30*, PG 36.112C. And on the whole issue of *Trinitas Aequalis* see the splendid analysis of Plagnieux, *Saint Gregoire*, Excursus J, 441-44.

²⁵ *De Paup. Am.*, PG 35.892C.

of God we shall be practicing what for Gregory is the finest part of love, the summit of which is attained in ‘kindheartedness and compassion towards those who are of one nature with us.’²⁶

We are thus taught that human beings are called to imitate God in loving that with which we stand in a relation of congruence. It is a teaching whose sense and implications Gregory has worked out in great ontological and theological detail. The centerpiece of Gregory’s conception of our imitating God brings together the three notions of appetition, limit and law.²⁷ The several relationships which link these three items seem to point to two correlative emphases of Gregory’s teaching: (i) what we intend to signify when we say that something is a created entity, and (ii) the order underpinning the love which unites things that are equal.

To be created is, to begin with, to have an appetite for God: resembling God, we naturally tend toward him. The appetite for God, however, in its turn intensifies our likeness to him by inclining us to remain within the limits of the nature which God has conferred on us. We may, in other words, speak of an appetitive quiescence within the limits of our nature as the fundamental inner law of our condition as creatures. This nature-governed quiescence not only determines the originary ontological law of our nature but also defines the sense of our imitation of God. Gregory’s teaching here is enucleated with great force in the following text:

There is this one, and so very great thing, which is necessary for kindness and for mutual consent, the imitation of God and of divine things. For it is to them alone that the soul, which has come to bear the image of God, can securely direct its gaze, doing so in order that its noble origin be made in the highest degree safe by means of its appetite for those things and by means of its resemblance to them, in so far as this is possible. In the second place, let us look aloft at the heaven above and to the earth below, keeping our ear attuned to the divine voice and let us thereby deeply learn the laws of nature. For the heaven, the earth, and sea, and this whole totality of things is a cosmos, the penumbra and heralding voice of God whereby

²⁶Ibid. 864B.

²⁷See the excellent enucleation of B. Tataki, *The Contribution of Cappadocia to Christian Thought*, pp. 159-60.

He is disclosed even as He remains hidden in the most profound silence. And this cosmos at the same time abides in a good and self-consistent state, remaining within the limits of nature, so that the order linking one thing to another is never ruptured, nor is there a departure from the fitting bonds that unite things. . . .²⁸

Our nature, like God's, is concentrated within itself in an inner unity. We are as His creatures intrinsically at one with ourselves; we are self-consistent entities. We must judge and act conformably to our inner constitution, with its feature of equably remaining within the unifying law which informs our nature.²⁹ We must neither lay hold of what is not ours, nor rise up in rejection of that which another human being is in himself or herself.³⁰ Inequality among humans is superficial and external. We are all of us congruent to one another. We must repeatedly remind ourselves of this structural equality which is ours as creatures of the three utterly equal divine Persons. "Let this fact persuade you," Gregory pleads, "of the value of compassion and the love of your fellows."

Consubstantiality and Human Praxis

We shall revisit Origen in preparation for a final taking stock in the results of our inquiry. For him there is a primordial region of reality in which there are three Persons unequal in their realization of the perfection of divinity. Within this domain there is subordination of the originate Persons to the single anarchical source of being called the Father. Derivative to this supreme region of reality is a realm of finite spirits, each one of which is equal in ontological perfection to all the others. What strikes one as odd in this ontological topology is that a social plurality of utterly equal created persons takes its origin, in a paradoxical way, from an ontological region in which there is inequality and subordination. How, we ask ourselves, could the social plurality of the world of equal finite spirits spring

²⁸*De Paup. Am.*, PG 35.740B-C.

²⁹We image God by remaining, in abiding quiescence, within the frontiers of our nature, as the three Persons remain in eternal equality one with another: 740B-C. It is in so residing within ourselves that we are able to draw closer, in an inner equality of unencumbered nature, with our neighbor: 905C. The harmony of equal human individuals imitates the equality of the divine Triad.

³⁰*De Paup. Am.*, PG 35.905C.

from a realm of being whose fundamental rule is inequality and a disturbing form of subordination?

We are in a position to sketch the manner in which Gregory is able to present a sound alternative to the teaching of Origen on these several matters. Gregory makes several moves which add up to a veritable charter on a sweeping front of theological and ontological issues. It is quite obvious that Gregory shifts the locus of inequality decisively away from the notion of personal moral fault, which Origen had assigned as the principle of the differences which distinguish us. These differences are for Gregory rather things over which we have no control. We thus differ from each other neither in virtue of possessing respectively different essences nor in virtue of having made different fundamental ethical choices.³¹ We differ from one another in hypostasis, due to a mode of distinction which neither separates us in nature nor grades us on a scale of moral worth. Gregory above all removes the shocking implication that a race of equals could take its origin from a configuration of creative causes consisting of a set of unequal members. We are both consubstantial and individually distinct, thanks to the fact that we take our being from a consubstantially self-identical Trinity of three Persons.³²

Trinitarian Equality and the Ontology of Compassion

The ultimate root of the equality of human persons is, for Gregory, the equality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Human equality is an inherently ontological perfection; it is quite plain that compassion itself has ontological roots. Consubstantial trinitarian equality

³¹It is for Gregory rather our bad choices which create those interior dispositions which blind us to the truth about our common humanity: PG 35.892B-C. The unity of God signified in the universal impartiality of the divine generosity is obscured by the want, the avarice, the war, which spring from human sin: Ibid., 1060C-61A.

³²In *Or. 23*, Gregory envisions certain adversaries (obviously either Origenist or of Origenist provenience) who taught that the Son and the Holy Spirit enjoy a divinely creative role in the production of the universe, even though neither of the Two according to those same adversaries could be said truly to be God. Gregory attacks this position on the grounds that (i) it diminishes the creative power of the first principle by introducing, at the level of properly creative causality, an inferior instrumentality, and (ii) it dishonors the Son and the Holy Spirit by subordinating them to the created world for whose production they were themselves, in the view of Gregory's adversaries, brought into being as 'instruments' of the creative act: PG 35.1160A-C. The thrust of Gregory's rebuttal underscores his cognizance of there being, in subordinationism, the clear intrusion of finite causal influence into the very substance of the creative act.

is the Archimedean point of Gregory's mandate that we imitate God. The ultimate significance of this imitation lies in the quiescence of our nature within its divinely appointed limits. This quiescence, or inner stasis of nature, has the character of a law, driving us to take up a relation of harmony and support with respect to other human beings.³³ The felt tendency arising from our response to this law is compassion. It is a tendency which plainly has its roots in our ontological similarity to God, the cause of our being. Compassion obviously imitates God, inasmuch as it arises from our consubstantial equality with each other, an equality which itself images the equality of the three divine Persons. Compassion imitates the *law* of God because compassion conforms to the impartiality with which God distributes his gifts. More exactly, compassion imitates the law of God by bringing us into conformity with the commanding drive within us for that which, in and for each human being, neither exceeds nor falls short of what is called for by nature. This commanding drive, itself the echo of the impartiality of God's favor, is inscribed in the natures of things and is the intrinsic bond of their cosmological coherence.

³³See *De Paup. Am.*, PG 35.892C in conjunction with 740C.



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'Mind' and 'Self' in the Christology of Saint Gregory the Theologian: Saint Gregory's Contribution to Christology and Christian Anthropology

KENNETH PAUL WESCHE

ST. GREGORY LIVED DURING A PERIOD CRITICAL FOR THE HISTORY OF doctrine. The Arian heresy, following close on the heels of the condemnation of Sabellianism,¹ provoked a flurry of theological activity imposing on churchmen of the age the necessity to articulate in clear philosophical language the apostolic tradition of faith concerning God and Jesus Christ. A philosophical vocabulary for expressing the Church's faith in the Holy Trinity was reached in the fourth century relatively quickly, even if not without great struggle.² But to express what the Church knew about Jesus Christ as God and Man would prove to be much more difficult.

Saint Gregory stands with the heresiarch Apollinaris at the beginning of the Christological controversies. Both men firmly grasped already the heart of the Christological problem, but Saint Gregory alone laid hold of its solution. In his own day, however, and up until the seventh century, the full significance of his insight remained hidden behind imprecise Christological formulations and debates that failed to clarify the content of key Christological terms. Not until the end of the sixth century, after the Fifth Ecumenical Synod had

¹ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. 2, *The Ante-Nicene Literature After Irenaeos* (Westminster, MD, 1983), p. 239f.

² On the history of the Trinitarian controversy, cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (1978), pp. 252-79; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (1981), pp. 231-95; and André de Halleux, " 'Hypostase' et 'Personne' dans la formation du dogme trinitaire (ca. 375-381)," in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 79 (1984), 313-69, 625-70.

established that the Chalcedonian term “hypostases” refers in Christology to the divine Logos, and therefore indicates the foundation or identity, rather than the product, of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ, were catholic theologians in a position finally to see the central problem of Christology which Saint Gregory had already seen, and to express in clear terms the vision Saint Gregory had already expressed in the fourth century.

The principle of unity (or hypostasis) of Christ was the central question in the Christological debates of the fourth-seventh centuries, and is still an issue today. Saint Gregory's contribution to Christology and anthropology lies in the fact that he does not use the term hypostasis in his Christological writings. Instead, he uses the terms “one and the same” (*εἰς καὶ ὁ αὐτός*) and “himself” (*ἐαυτοῦ*). With these terms he establishes a uniquely Christological context for understanding the inner unity of Christ, and for positively refining the anthropological signification of the terms “mind” (*νοῦς*), “self” (*ὁ αὐτός*), and the phrase “in the image of God” (*χριτὸς εἰκόνα τοῦ Θεοῦ*). His thought suggests by these terms important clarifications for the notion of “person” or *hypostasis*, as it will take shape in the heat of the Christological controversies over the next three hundred years. These clarifications in turn make more accessible to intellectual understanding the Christian vision of human nature and destiny, insofar as they explain how the assumption of a full human nature by the divine Logos constitutes a genuine Incarnation (i.e., Jesus is himself the divine Logos; he is not joined to the divine Logos), and restores man to his natural destiny of communion with God, conceived in terms of deification. In this light, Saint Gregory is shown to be predecessor to the tradition of Cyrilian Chalcedonianism, and not the traditions of Nestorianism or Monophysitism—both of which appealed to him as an authoritative witness in support of their own Christological views.

In order to show the full significance of Gregory's contribution to Christian doctrine, he must be seen within the context primarily of the Greek and Origenistic traditions that shaped his philosophical thought.

THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The Common Anthropological Notion of the Human Mind and the Difficulty This Posed for Identifying the “Self” of Christ

By the time of Saint Gregory's conflict with Apollinaris in the

last quarter of the fourth century over the doctrine of Christ, Arianism's clout in matters concerning the theology of the Trinity was waning, as the controversy over terms used to express the Church's faith in the Trinity was nearing its end, with the agreement reached between the "old Nicaeans" and the "neo-Nicaeans." But in Christology, Arianism continued to exert a determining influence, for attempts to formulate an orthodox Christology, while upholding the confession of Jesus' consubstantiality with the Father on the one hand, needed also to affirm Jesus' consubstantiality with us without reopening any opportunity thereby for the Arian rejoinder that Jesus' human weaknesses proved his substantial inferiority to the Father.³

The process of finding proper philosophical concepts to signify Jesus' consubstantiality with the Father and with us, however, brought into view a whole new set of questions in the Christological sphere. How does one explain Jesus' two consubstantialities without implying two different persons? What is a person, anyway? And how does "who" one is, that is, personal particularity, relate to "what" one is, that is, to one's specific nature? Working through these difficulties would require a vocabulary no less precise—actually, even more precise—than what had been worked out for the doctrine of the Trinity.

From this it becomes clear that the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ cannot be explored in isolation of one another. Already, in the fourth century, the concept linking the two together found expression in the term "hypostasis." The Cappadocians, in line with the Origenistic tradition, distinguished between hypostasis and *ousia* or essence, and applied the term *hypostasis* to designate each member of the Holy Trinity, and *ousia* to the divine nature that exists in each divine *hypostasis*.⁴ In this context, the term *hypostasis* is "not the

³ L. Rougier, in "Le sens des termes 'ousia,' 'hypostasis,' et 'prosopon' dans les controverses trinitaires post-niceennes," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 74 (1916), 48-63, 133-89, explains that Arianism, along with Sabellianism, conceived "ousia" and "hypostasis" as individual substance, or person when speaking of reasonable being. On this basis, Sabellios fell into adoptionism, declaring Jesus to be a simple man, since his essence obviously was human and thereby different from the Father's. Arius, using the same philosophical concept, attributed to the divine Logos what Origen had referred to the soul of Christ [cf. Ekkehard Mühlenberg, "Apollinaris von Laodicea und die originistische Tradition," in *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 76/3-4 (1985), 280], and concluded that the divine Logos, because of his creaturely mutability, is of an inferior and different essence than the Father (Rougier, p. 50).

⁴ Origen spoke of three divine hypostases, in order to show that the existence of

indefinite notion of the essence, but it is that which restricts and circumscribes the common and uncircumscribed [essence] by means of the properties which are manifest in the particular reality [*ἐν τῷ τινὶ πράγματι διὰ τῶν ἐπιφαινομένων ἰδιαμάτων*].⁵ Apollinaris, also a disciple of Origen, took the next step and applied the term to Christology to affirm unambiguously that Christ is himself the second hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, and that he took on human flesh to form the one *hypostasis* and *physis* (nature) of God the Word incarnate.

Apollinaris' error, of course, was to deny the assumption of a human mind by the divine Logos incarnate. But this error also reveals Apollinaris' insight and it directs us immediately to the heart of the Christological problem. The "nous," or the highest part of the soul—however one wants to understand that—was held universally to be the "self" (*ὁ αὐτός*), the real man.⁶ But in what terms was "nous" as the "self" understood? In the Apollinarian controversy of the fourth century, the question of the "nous" and its role in the Incarnation centered on the mind's natural mutability, and whether this rendered man in the depths of his being capable of a union "according to

the Son and Holy Spirit is objectively real, and that even though they come from the Father, they are not temporal emanations or masks (*prosopa*) of the Father. Cf., for example, *Commentary on John* 2.5 and 10.21, and *Contra Celsus* 8.12. See Wolfson, pp. 308-22. Ernst Hammerschmidt, "Die Begriffsentwicklung in der altkirchlichen Theologie zwischen dem ersten allgemeinen Konzil von Nizäa (325) und dem zweiten allgemeinen Konzil von Konstantinopel (381)", *Theologische Revue* 4/5 (1955), 145-54. St. Athanasios, also, at the beginning of the Arian dispute, summarized the Orthodox faith in speaking of "One divinity and one God in three hypostases" (*De Incarnatione* 10, PG 26.1000); cf. Rougier, p. 52f.

⁵ Ep. 38 in *St. Basil: The Letters*, Vol. 1, trans. Roy Deferrari (Cambridge, MA, 1972), pp. 200-01.

⁶ This was true for Christian as well as non-Christian thinkers. Aristotle, for example, explained that "the intellectual element (*τὸ διανοητικόν*) in man is thought to be a man's real self" (*Eth. Nic.* 9.4, 1166a, 16-17). Plotinos wrote, "The soul is the most important part [of the human composite] and is the man himself" [*τὸ δὲ ψυχιώτατον καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ σύνθρωπος*]. If it is this, then the soul is related to the body as form to matter or as user to tool; in either way, the soul is the self [*ἡ φυχὴ αὐτός*] ("Enn. 4.7.1). The Jewish Platonist Philo of Alexandria explained that "the mind in each of us is properly and in the true sense the man" (*Heres.* 48.231). Origen, the most influential Christian theologian for the East, wrote, "Our principal part [*προγενερένη ὑπόστασις*] is [that part of us, viz., the soul, that is created] in the image of the Creator" (*Commentary on John* 20.182, PG 14.621B.2-3). Also influential was St. Didymos the Blind of Alexandria who echoed the common understanding of the day: "Man, properly speaking, is mind and soul" [*Sur Genèse* 1.26-28 in SC 233 (1976) 147].

essence” (*χατ’ οὐσίαν*—Saint Gregory’s term) with the divine Logos, or if it set up an essential inner conflict within Christ that would make any kind of union impossible. But although this concern stands more to the front in the exchanges with Apollinaris, I do not believe it to be the real underlying question driving the Christological problem.⁷

“Nous,” the mind, is also said in the fourth century to be self-determining (*αὐτεξόύσιος*), and the ruling principle (*ἡγεμονικόν*) of the human composite. In these terms, the concept of “self” goes far beyond the question of natural mutability, for it has not merely to do with what is most essential to human nature, but with individual personality. It suggests that within the human composite, one will find the free, independent agent and ultimate initiator of all the particular individual’s activities in the soul or the mind. Saint Basil, for example, offers a very interesting and significant understanding of the soul when he describes it in these terms: “The ‘Ego’ is said with respect to the inner man [*ἐγώ γὰρ τὸν ἔσω ἀνθρώπον*]. . . . The ‘Ego’ is the rational principle of the soul [*ἐγώ τὸ λογικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς*].”⁸

Now if the mind is conceived as the real “self,” and if the divine Logos, in becoming man, assumed a human mind, then precisely who is Christ? To say it more crudely, how many “people” or “selves” are there in Christ, and which of them constitutes Christ’s real identity? Is there in Christ one agent or two initiating all of his activities?

Apollinaris understood that Christ must be one and so he taught one hypostasis and one actor (*ὁ ἐνεργῶν*), that is, one “hegemonikon” or “mind” which is the divine Logos;⁹ the disciples of Diodore understood that Christ must be two perfect natures, so they maintained two perfect *hypostases* and *prosopa*, and by their manner of speaking clearly understood this to mean that there are in Christ two

⁷ Another major element in the philosophical apparatus used by churchmen of this period to explain the principle of union was the Aristotelian notion of “predominance.” The center of union is to be found in that element of the mixture or composition in question that predominates over the other element/s. Thus, in Gregory’s “two natures” Christology, the divine Logos can be considered as the principle of union because he is dominant over the human nature he assumes [cf. H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers: Faith, Trinity, Incarnation* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), pp. 404-07]. But I do not see this, either, as the real driving force of the Christological question even in the fourth century. This notion of predominance is rather taken up in an attempt to address the philosophical difficulties posed in accounting for Christ’s humanity without implying a dual identity.

⁸ Homily 1.7, *Sur l’Origine de l’Homme* in SC 160, p. 183.

⁹ Fragment 107 in Hans Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule* (Tübingen, 1904), p. 232.

actors or subjects of attribution. Saint Gregory understood that Christ must be fully God and fully man, but one and the same “self” (*εἰς καὶ ὁ αὐτός*). But how can one *divine* identity be maintained in a complete *human* nature without rendering the assumption of a complete noetic soul (human mind) by the divine Logos in his Incarnation meaningless?

Fundamental in this question is an ambiguity established in the fourth century with respect to the term *hypostasis*, at the very beginning of its Christological application. This ambiguity is found primarily among the Orthodox who apply the term *hypostasis*, understood as the particular subject as opposed to the universal essence, in two subtle but significantly different ways. It appears that the Orthodox themselves were unaware of the ambiguity in their application of the term, for while one can find the same author in the same passage and context, using *hypostasis* in these two different ways, one never finds the shift in focus made explicit. The fathers were trying to express a mystery, and their attention perhaps was so taken up by the ever-present dangers of falling into Apollinarianism on the one hand, and Nestorianism on the other, that without being conscious of it they may have shifted their ground when speaking of the *hypostasis* of Christ in order first to avoid the one error, then to avoid the other. Clarifying this ambiguity is fundamental for coming to the heart of “Byzantine” Christology and for comprehending the profound insight of Saint Gregory concerning the identity of Christ, and what that means for the nature and destiny of man.

Two Notions of Hypostasis: External/Descriptive (Structural), and Internal/Self (Identity)

In its general historical context, the term *hypostasis* was used to designate either the concrete individual subject, or objective reality as opposed to what is imaginary or illusory.¹⁰ Corresponding to these were two meanings acquired in an ecclesial context: *hypostasis* can signify existence, in which case it is synonymous to *ousia*, or it can designate that which exists by itself, thereby setting forth the individual distinct from other individuals.¹¹ One can discern the

¹⁰A. Michel, “Hypostase,” DThC 369ff. The term *hypostasis* received a somewhat technical sense in the Platonic tradition, with Plotinos who spoke of the three primary hypostases—the One, Intellect, and Soul—which serve as intermediaries between God and the world (*Enneads* 5.1). But in common language, and in Aristotle, these two senses prevailed (Michel, cols. 369-70).

¹¹As summarized by John of Damascus, *Dialectica* 42, PG 94.612BC. Cf. Michel, 372.

transmission of these ideas in the more narrow context of Christology, where the word comes to denote the particular individual, viz. Christ, as well as the reality of his two natures, particularly in the Antiochene tradition and in Nestorianism, with special emphasis on his human nature to affirm that it really exists and is not illusory.¹²

But a more nuanced ambiguity of meaning emerges in the transfer of hypostasis from the doctrine of the Trinity to Christology. In the Cappadocian application of hypostasis—to denote each member of the Trinity—hypostasis is associated with the characteristics or properties that distinguish each hypostasis from the other two divine hypostases.¹³ Understandably, this process looks on the outside of the hypostasis, and describes the personal characteristics or properties which distinguish each member of the Trinity. For, obviously enough, if the divine essence is unknowable, how can one enter inside the divine hypostases so as to grasp the incomprehensible divine essence which exists in the hypostases? One therefore can only describe the personal, individual characteristics that distinguish each of the divine Persons as they are manifested to the eyes of faith. Consequently, the focus is on the external description of the hypostasis, and one seeks to explain what one sees.

When Apollinaris, and Saint Cyril after him, adopted the Trinitarian context of hypostasis for Christology, they effected a subtle shift of focus which they tacitly assumed but did not express. When considering Christ, they still understand hypostasis in terms of the particular ἄτομος (individual), but now, rather than merely *describing* what one sees on the “outside” that distinguishes this particular from other particulars, they also look “inside” the particular so as to *identify* who is there.

Among Orthodox theologians now, the external or descriptive notion of hypostasis, which is derived from its use in the doctrine of the Trinity, carries over into Christology when one describes the structure, or the parts (the two complete natures) that make up the hypostasis of Christ; but this external/descriptive notion is tacitly exchanged for the internal notion of hypostasis when one shifts ground in order to identify who Christ is. The result of this unnoticed interplay between two subtly different notions of hypostasis is a critical

¹²Marcel Richard, “L’Introduction du mot hypostase dans la théologie de l’incarnation,” *Mélanges de sciences religieuses* 2 (1945) reprinted in *Opera Minora* 2 (Turnhout, Brepols, 1977), pp. 1-56.

¹³St. Basil, Ep. 38, p. 203f.

imprecision in articulating Christological doctrine.

By the same token, however, when this ambiguity is not taken up, when one rigidly maintains the external and descriptive notion of hypostasis in Christology, then one falls into Nestorianism. Since one is looking strictly at the outside of the particular in question so as to describe what one sees, one can speak of Christ only in terms of his "structural" makeup.

Theodore of Mopsuestia joined Saint Gregory in opposing Apollinaris. But Saint Gregory would have nothing to do with the term *hypostasis* in a Christological context, whereas Theodore applied hypostasis to Christology in its primitive sense, i.e., to signify a complete reality existing as a concrete whole¹⁴—a sense which lends itself naturally to the external notion of hypostasis as established in its Trinitarian context; for in both instances the focus is on the particular as a whole, as seen from the outside, rather than on who is "in" the particular. In these terms, if Christ's human nature is complete, then it forms a hypostasis, and if it is really existing, then obviously it must manifest itself somehow (otherwise, it wouldn't exist), which it does in its "prosopon." So for Theodore, there could be no prosopon without a corresponding hypostasis and nature. Since there are two complete natures in Christ, there must be two hypostases and two prosopa. The union takes place not in the divine Logos, but in the mingling together of the two prosopa of the two complete natures and hypostases, to produce one Christic prosopon which manifests both the human nature, which is Jesus, and the divine nature, which is the divine Logos.¹⁵ Thus, if one asks, who is Christ, Theodore and Nestorios cannot answer that he is the divine Logos alone, for the divine Logos constitutes one of the members or parts in the structure of Christ's prosopon. They and their followers will therefore answer: He is perfect God and perfect man who have come together, each in their own hypostasis (complete nature) and prosopon (the manifestation of the complete nature), to produce the Christ who is not one and the same, but who is the dispensation of the divine Logos' conjunction with the human temple, Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁶

¹⁴M. Richard, "L'Introduction . . .," pp. 17-25.

¹⁵Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Incarnation*, fragments 7 and 8, trans. R. A. Norris, Jr., in *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia, 1980), p. 120. For the Latin text, see H. B. Swete, ed., *Theodori Episcopi Mopsuesteni in Epistolas B. Pauli Commentarii*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1880), Vol. 2, Appendix A, pp. 298-99.

¹⁶Cf. the Nestorian texts compiled by L. Abramowski and Alan E. Goodman, *A*

This use of hypostasis in the sphere of Christology indicates an inability to think in terms of identity. Yet it tacitly assumes two subjects of attribution in Christ, two identities or “selves,” for the philosophical framework employed to express this particular theological intuition does not allow one to penetrate beyond the external appearance of the individual to his inner core, or identity and consequently confuses the two. From this perspective, if there are two different sets of natural properties, there are two hypostases and natures, and if there are two hypostases and natures, there are two prosopa or subjects of attribution. If one denies a human hypostasis or prosopon in Christ, one is denying any human properties and therefore a human nature which supports those properties. One has fallen unwittingly into monophysitism.¹⁷ At the same time, however, when this external or “structural” notion of hypostasis is exclusively applied to Christ, then Christ is presented not as a “who” but as a “what,” as the structural combination of two particulars, each with its own hidden inner core, or “who,” or center of initiation.¹⁸

If, on the other hand, one sees the Incarnation from a “Cyrillian” perspective as an “episode” in the life of the divine Logos, so that one’s object of contemplation both before and after the flesh is the same, viz. the divine Logos, then one does not look on the outside of Christ to describe whatever natural characteristics one sees, but one looks on the inside in order to identify him as the divine Logos incarnate.¹⁹ Accordingly, this theological intuition must necessarily

Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts (2 vols., Cambridge, 1972), 2, p. 109: “It is not that the same one was the two of them,” and p. 114, “If they ask us: Who was it that was born? We reply: The temple of God the Word while God the Word was dwelling in it. . . . Again they ask: Who was it who was born? We answer: The dispensation of God the Word” (from various chapters of pseudo-Nestorios).

¹⁷ As Charles Moeller observed in reference to what he believed was a crypto-monophysitism in the Cyrillian Chalcedonianism of Leontios of Jerusalem in the sixth century, “Textes ‘Monophysites’ de Léonce de Jérusalem,” EThL 27 (1951), 469.

¹⁸ R. A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ* (Oxford, 1963). While Theodore asserts that God is the primary agent of redemption, and the human nature is his instrument, he nonetheless conceives the two elements in Christ as two agents, two psychological subjects and centers of action or initiative, in a single work (pp. 193-96, 200). Cf. also H. M. Diepen, “L’Assumptus homo à Chalcédoine,” RevThom 51 (1951), 579, who observes that Theodore distinguishes in Christ a double “quis” together with a double “quid.”

¹⁹ Joseph Lebon, *Le Monophysisme Sévérien: Etude Historique, Littéraire et Théologique sur la Résistance monophysite au concile de Chalcédoine* (Louvain, 1909), p. 178f.

shift its focus when moving from the doctrine of the Trinity to Christology, and assume an internal notion of hypostasis in order, not to describe *what* is observed in each of his natures, but to identify *who* he is, viz. the divine Logos. In this case, one will respond, as did Apollinaris, as well as Saint Cyril and his followers: the hypostasis of Christ is the divine Logos and none other.

Apollinaris was consistent in his primary intention—to affirm the identity of Christ as the divine Logos only—but he resolved the accompanying philosophical problem concerning the role of Christ's soul by simply denying him a human mind that would constitute his humanity as a separate ruling principle or “self.”²⁰ Saint Cyril in the fifth century, and his followers both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian, shared Apollinaris' primary intention but they recognized also that orthodox Christology requires the affirmation of a human noetic soul. However, since they utterly rejected Nestorianism, they were forced into an ambiguous application of hypostasis. When disavowing any connection to Apollinaris, they insisted that Christ's human nature is complete with a human noetic soul. From this angle, the hypostasis of Christ is manifest as two complete natures, showing forth the natural properties characteristic of each; we are now looking on the outside of Christ. But when they eschewed Nestorians, they insisted that the hypostasis of Christ is the one divine Logos, and that there are not two subjects or two sons, but one, the divine Logos who himself was incarnate; we are now looking inside Christ and identifying who he is. In these terms, hypostasis refers to the subject, that is, to the self or agent who is manifested by, but is not identical to, the distinguishing properties or nature(s), for conceived analytically, the hypostasis is not the distinguishing properties or nature(s); rather, the hypostasis possesses them as his own.²¹

²⁰Richard, “L’Introduction . . .”, pp. 5-7. According to Epiphanius, the Apollinarists held that “man is an hypostasis by virtue of his ‘nous.’ If, therefore, the Word (Nous) and divine Pneuma assumed a human nous, there would be two hypostases in Christ, which is impossible” (from Epiphanius’ *Ancoratus* 77; PG 43.161B; see also the pseudo-Athanasian (Apollinarian) work, *Quod unus sit Christus* in Lietzmann, pp. 294ff. Richard notes further that the major principle of the Apollinarists was that every noetic nature, every intellect (nous), is necessarily an hypostasis. Thus it is impossible that there should coexist in Christ the Word the divine Mind and a human mind without attributing to him two hypostases (p. 7).

²¹Such analytical detail will not be attained among orthodox theologians until the sixth century. This summary description of hypostasis and its relation to its constituting elements is taken from Leontios of Jerusalem, who was one of Emperor Justinian’s court theologians in the second quarter of the sixth century. Cf. *Adversus*

These different angles are frequently interchanged under the guidance, it appears, of theological instinct rather than philosophical precision. Consequently, the Alexandrian approach to Christology is characterized by an apparent failure to deal squarely with the role played by Christ's human soul. If it does not constitute a human subject in Christ—since that is the divine Logos—then what is it? So while the Cyrillian “school” will affirm the presence of a noetic soul in Christ, they fail to explain satisfactorily its theological significance.²²

The explanation for this may not be hard to find, however. For notice that the notion of hypostasis as identity that has been uncovered here corresponds exactly to Saint Basil's description of the “self” or the “I” in the passage cited above, which reads in full: “The ‘ego’ (the ‘I’) is said with respect to the inner man. That which is exterior is not me, but belongs to me. The hand is not the ‘ego,’ but the ‘ego’ is the rational principle of the soul.”²³ Observe that in a Christological context, the notion of hypostasis quietly assumes the role of identity or “self”²⁴ which in anthropology is identified with the human mind or soul.²⁵

Nestorianos 2.1, PG 86.1529CD-32BC. For English translation and analysis of this text, see my study, “The Christology of Leontios of Jerusalem: Monophysite or Chalcedonian?” in *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 31/1 (1987) 69ff.

²²Cf. Adolphe Gesché, “L’âme humaine de Jésus dans la christologie du IVe siècle: Le témoignage du commentaire sur les Psaumes découvert à Toura,” in *RHE* 54/2-3 (1959), 385-425, and G. Jouassard, “Un problème d’anthropologie et de christologie chez S. Cyrille d’Alexandrie,” in *RES* 43 (1955), 361-78 and 45 (1957), 209-24.

²³“Ἐγώ γάρ κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἀνθρώπον. Τὰ δέ πάντα ἔγώ, ἀλλὰ ἐμά, οὐ γάρ ἡ κείρεται ἔγώ, ἀλλὰ ἔγώ τὸ λογικόν τῆς φυχῆς.” See also the passage from Plotinos cited above: “The soul is the most important, and the man himself. If it is this, then it is related to the body as form to matter or as user to tool; in either way, the soul is the self” (ἢ φυχῆς αὐτός; *Enneads* 4.7.1; the “body” corresponds to the nature or distinguishing properties, the “psyche” corresponds to the hypostasis).

²⁴This tacit assumption is made explicit in the eighth century, in John of Damascus: “The hypostasis refers neither to ‘what’ something is, nor is it a particular quality, but it is the ‘who’ (ἢ ὑπόστασις οὐδὲ τὸ τι ἔστι δηλοῖ, οὐδὲ δύοτον τι ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ τις ἔστιν),” *Dialectica* 17, PG 94.581CD.

²⁵Indeed, in anthropology the hypostasis comes to be associated with mind. For example, Epiphanius, in the passage cited above, takes *κατ’ ὑπόστασιν* in the sense of “truly existing” (*κατ’ ἀλήθειαν*) and calls the human mind an hypostasis to insist that it exists “in reality” (*κατ’ ὑπόστασιν*—Haer. 77, PG 42.676; cf. Michel, “Hypostasis” col. 370). Didymos the Blind links the two together in *In Psalms* 68.17, PG 39.1456CD, and *In Job*, PG 39.1132BC (cf. Michel, col. 381). Gregory of Nyssa follows Didymos by giving to hypostasis the capacity of thought, thus identifying hypostasis with the Latin “persona” (*Catechetical Orations* 1, PG 45.13ff.).

Christological confession is penetrating anthropological doctrine, transfiguring old concepts to reveal a much deeper vision of human personality. That this penetration was taking place does not seem to have been consciously grasped by Orthodox theologians, as suggested by their inconsistent application of key categories. When speaking of Christ, they identify the subject or "who" of Christ as the divine Logos, which for anthropology raises the question of the significance of the human mind or soul; but when speaking in a strictly anthropological context, they fall back into the old concepts and resume identifying the mind with the real self or subject, which, if applied to Christology, renders the notion of one divine identity in a complete human nature puzzling.²⁶

The mark of an orthodox theologian in these early stages of the Christological controversies, therefore, is not consistency, but rather an ambiguity of expression produced by the theological intuition that Christ is himself the divine Logos who became fully man without ceasing to be God. Saint Gregory is one whose Christological articulation on the particular question under study is not always clearly explained, but it is nonetheless remarkably consistent. This would suggest that his account of Christ was inspired by a profound vision beyond that of his peers, which lacked only a terminology of corresponding precision and sophistication. However, before we turn directly to Saint Gregory, there is another aspect to the theological context which must be set forth, and that is the association of the mind or self with the image of God.

The Mind and the Image of God

The original context for the doctrine of the image of God is, of course, anthropological. In this context, as compared to the identification of mind with the real self (*αὐτὸς* or *ἐγώ*), or to the uniquely Christological context in which it is placed by the fathers, the doctrine that man exists in the image of God draws one's thought not so much towards the mystery of personal identity as towards the

The anthropological identification of hypostasis and "nous" is transferred to the sphere of Trinitarian reflection in Gregory the Theologian where the hypostasis receives the note of intellect (*Oratio* 33.16, PG 36.233f.; cf. Hammerschmidt, art. cit., pp. 152-54. Cf. further Rougier, art. cit., p. 57f.

²⁶The application of old anthropological concepts is especially evident in the spiritual tradition as, for example, in the writings of the *Philokalia*.

mystery of human being. What is it that makes man to be “man?” This shift of focus represents another ambiguity in the philosophical articulation of the Christian faith by the early Fathers, but together with the ambiguity discussed above concerning the different roles given to mind in anthropological and Christological contexts, it is important to grasp in order to appreciate Saint Gregory’s contribution to Christological doctrine and Christian anthropology.

In Greek thought, the “image of God” is identified as the mind, or the soul, the divine part that constitutes the “real man.” This identification is taken up by Philo who weaves Hebraic and Platonic categories into a theological synthesis that will profoundly influence the articulation of Eastern Christian thought through its transmission by Origen. The mind, says Philo, is “intimately related to the divine Logos, being an imprint or fragment or effulgence of that blessed nature.”²⁷ The divine Logos is begotten of God as one of his two powers, and mediates between God and all of creation.²⁸ So, as a particle of the divine Logos, the nature of the mind is incomprehensible like the divine Logos, its begetter.²⁹ And yet, the soul does not have being as does God, for the soul exists ultimately from God who, as the source of all, alone has true being.³⁰

For Origen also, the “image of God” is the mind or soul of man. Origen makes it clear, however, that the mind or soul was created, and not begotten or emanating.³¹ Like Philo, he maintains that the soul’s origin lies in the divine Logos, but Origen, incorporating the teaching of Saint Paul in Colossians 1.15, brings out and develops a twofold signification implied in man’s being created “in the image of God” that will contribute significantly to the thought of the Cappadocians.³²

On the one hand, being in the image of God defines the very nature of man: “Our principal substance (hypostasis),” he writes, “is our

²⁷ *De Opificio Mundi*, trans. David Winston, 46 (*Philo of Alexandria: The Contemplative Life, the Giants, and Selections*), p. 143.

²⁸ *De Cherubim* 27-28 and *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit* 205; *De Plantatione* 9-10; Winston, pp. 89 and 93f.

²⁹ *De Somniis* 1.30-33; Winston, p. 149.

³⁰ *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat* 159-60; Winston, p. 132.

³¹ *Peri Archon* 1.3.3 and *Contra Celsum* 4.30. Origen may also have in mind the doctrine of Plotinos (*Enneads* 4.8.3).

³² Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, trans. A. S. Worrall (San Francisco, 1989), pp. 94-95; and Crouzel, *Théologie de l’image de Dieu chez Origène* (Paris, 1976).

being created in the image of the Creator.”³³ For Origen, the “*χατ’ εἰκόνα*” corresponds to Philo’s “soul of the soul.” Obviously, when we speak in this manner we have shifted our view somewhat so that our thought is now inclined towards the mystery of particularity; but in its overall context, the significance of this lies in the fact that in the deepest, most essential depths of man’s being, man is defined not simply as a rational mortal being, but as a creature who is constituted in the image and likeness of God; if he were to lose the image of God, he would cease to exist; he would no longer be “man.”³⁴

This becomes axiomatic among the disciples of Origen. Didymos the Blind of Alexandria, for example, explains in his commentary on Genesis that “Paul teaches this notion of image and likeness in Colossians 3.10, ‘That you might come to be in the image of the One who created you,’ even though they were already such *according to the principle of substance* (*χατὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς οὐσιώσεως*).” For Didymos, being “in the image” belongs to nature, whereas being “in the likeness” belongs to virtue.³⁵ Sin therefore does not cause man to lose the image, it only covers it up.³⁶ The same holds true for Saint Basil, for whom the “inner man,” that is to say, the “*έγω*” or “rational element” of the soul, *is* the *χατ’ εἰκόνα*,³⁷ as well as for Saint Gregory of Nyssa.³⁸

On the other hand, the Pauline identification of the image of God with the divine Logos in whom man was brought into being is combined with Platonic categories to contribute substantially to the Greek fathers’ articulation of their understanding of man.³⁹ This identifica-

³³ “Καὶ ἡμῶν δὲ ἡ προηγουμένη ὑπόστασίς ἔστιν ἐν τῷ χατ’ εἰκόνᾳ τοῦ κτίσαντος,” *Commentary on John* 20.20; PG 14.621BC.

³⁴ For Origen, the permanence of the *χατ’ εἰκόνα* in man also assures an ever-present possibility of conversion; cf. Crouzel, *Origen*, pp. 96ff.

³⁵ *Sur la Genèse*, SC 233, p. 151. See also pp. 141-47.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 153.

³⁷ *Sur l’Origine de l’Homme*, Homélie 1.7 in SC 160 (1970), 183.

³⁸ *On Virginity*, PG 46.369B-76B, and Homily 15, *On Canticle of Canticles*, PG 44.1093C-96D; trans. Jean Daniélou, in *From Glory to Glory* (Crestwood, NY, 1979) pp. 112f. and 281f.

³⁹ Origen makes this identification in *Contra Celsus* 6.66.1f., and 7.28-29. *Hom in Gen.* 1.13; in *Hom in Luc.* 8.2, Origen calls man “*imago imaginis*”). Cf. Henri Crouzel, *Origen* pp. 92ff. See also St. Athanasios, who followed his mentor and predecessor Alexander of Alexandria, an Origenist, in describing the divine Logos as the “express Image of the Father,” (*Contra Gentes* 34, trans. Robert W. Thomson, in *Oxford Early Christian Texts* (Oxford, 1971), p. 95; for Alexander, cf. *Ep. Ad Alexan-*

tion is in fact central to Eastern Christian anthropology. It underscores that even though man, as body and soul, is created he nonetheless possesses, by virtue of that part of him that makes him “man,” an innate, natural capacity—not to *be* God—but to receive the uncreated, incomprehensible God in a vital, intimate communion of love.

Origen understands that because the *χατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ Θεοῦ* defines man by nature, and because the Image in whom the image is brought into being is the Son of God, the complete definition of man is “*imago imaginis*,” the image who exists in the Image. In the Origenistic tradition, this gives to the doctrine of the *χατ' εἰκόνα* the understanding that the characteristics of reason, ruling, and freedom are all fundamental qualities of the image because its essential characteristic is the inalienable capacity to receive God and to exist in communion with him in the deepest depths of one's being.⁴⁰ Since the *χατ' εἰκόνα* is essential to human nature, it can never be lost, even when man falls away from God.⁴¹

For Saint Basil (whose pneumatology is developed along the same lines as that of Saint Irenaios), man lost in the Fall not the image of God, but the indwelling communion of the Holy Spirit. The renewal of mankind takes place when the Lord breathes his Holy Spirit into the face of his apostles, restoring the grace which had been lost by Adam, so that the Church, now energized (*ἐνεργεῖται*) by the Holy Spirit, has become life-giving for all men.⁴² Through the quickening of the Holy Spirit, the soul of man is purified from every spot; the natural beauty of the *χατ' εἰκόνα* is illumined and the soul is brought back to spiritual communion with the Holy Spirit.⁴³ Through her assimilation (*όμοίωσις* and *οἰκείωσις*) to the Holy Spirit, the soul is able to see and to know in the inmost depths of her being the inef-

drum Constantinopolitanum 9.12). Didymos the Blind of Alexandria writes: “The Image of God is His only-begotten Son. It does not say (in Gen 1.26) ‘Let us make the image, man,’ but ‘Let us make man in the image,’ which means that it is of this Image, the Son, that this image, man, attains to become the image and likeness.” *Sur la Genèse*, p. 149.

⁴⁰Didymos the Blind, a disciple of Origen, states that, “Man, properly speaking, is mind and soul. It is this which, partaking of God, becomes by this very participation, His image.” For that reason, “Man has been made capable to contain the Image (*χωρητικὸς γὰρ κατεσκευάσθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς εἰκόνος*),” pp. 147, 149.

⁴¹*Peri Archon* 4.4.9-10.

⁴²*On the Holy Spirit* 16.39, PG 32.140Df.

⁴³*Ibid.* 9.23, PG 32.109BC.

fable beauty of the archetype, the invisible icon of God.⁴⁴ Such a one becomes a son of God because, in communion with the Holy Spirit, he is conformed to the image of the Son of God.⁴⁵

In Saint Basil, then, the doctrine of the *xat' eixóva*, explained in the context of theosis that takes place through the indwelling communion of the Holy Spirit, affirms that the communion with God which is an innate capacity in man is enlivened not simply by some created grace of God, but by the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit himself in the inmost depths of our being, which is opened to us through Christ.⁴⁶ Saint Basil's doctrine on the Holy Spirit implies that man's soul is not able by itself to live the divine life of God, for it is not God. For this reason, if man's soul is to realize its natural definition—communion with God or theosis—union with God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit must take place, not in the flesh only, but in the deepest part of man that defines him as man, in his soul or mind.

One can see already the unity of anthropological understanding that exists between the pneumatology of Saint Basil and the Christology of Saint Gregory the Theologian—which Apollinaris did not comprehend or share. Both take from the Philonic and Origenistic tradition the conviction that communion with God must be realized in the inmost depths of man's being if he is to realize his natural definition and destiny. A closer look at this understanding of the *xat' eixóva* in man reveals, moreover, how Saint Gregory could address the chief Christological difficulty, how to maintain one divine identity in a complete human nature when the human nature includes a human mind. The image of God in man refers to human nature; but the image of God in whom man is created refers to the Person of the divine Logos. Created in the image of God, the soul of man possesses *by nature* the capacity to receive the *Person* of the Image of God. The realization of human nature *as nature*, in other words, is precisely to receive the divine *Person*, and through his Incarnation, human persons enter naturally into communion with the *Person* of the Father through the indwelling of the *Person* of the Holy Spirit given in the *Person* of the Son. Whatever questions remain concerning the nature and role of the human mind in Christ, this at least is clear: the human mind is defined as the distinctive ele-

⁴⁴Ibid. 18.47, PG 32.153AC.

⁴⁵Ibid. 26.61, PG 32.180AB.

⁴⁶Ibid. 7.17-19, PG 32.96C-101D.

ment in man that makes him man, and its definition is realized through communion with the Holy Trinity. Through this communion, the whole being of man is deified, that is to say, permeated with the life and attributes of God through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

In Saint Gregory of Nyssa, the image which is connatural to the soul⁴⁷ exists in the uncreated Image, which itself is present not only in the created image, but transcends it for the uncreated Image is by nature infinite and wholly outside the natural rational contemplation of man.⁴⁸ At the same time, however, the Image in which man exists is the second hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, and though the essence of God is wholly beyond the capacity of the human mind, God is nonetheless knowable in the hypostasis of the Son.⁴⁹ This means that as *imago imaginis* man is by nature wedded to the infinite, incomprehensible being of God in the hypostasis of the divine Logos. The *κατ' εξόντα* therefore implies for Saint Gregory a paradox: on the one hand, no nature can move outside of itself, for if it does it passes from existence;⁵⁰ on the other hand, man's constitution in the Image of God—the hypostasis of the divine Logos—means that the natural movement of the created finite being of man takes him beyond his natural limits into the infinite uncreated being of God. The paradox is illumined fully only in the mystery of the Incarnation:

Christ, the Power and Wisdom of God, who being in His own nature not made by human hands, received a created existence when He was to build his tabernacle among us. Thus the same tabernacle is both created and uncreated: uncreated in His preexistence, He receives a created subsistence (*σύστασιν*) precisely in this material tabernacle. . . . It is God, then, the Only-Begotten, who encompasses in Himself the entire universe, who has built His own tabernacle among us.⁵¹

That is to say, the natural movement of man's created being into

⁴⁷On *Virginity*, PG 46.369B-76B; in *From Glory to Glory*, trans. Jean Daniélou (Crestwood, NY, 1979), pp. 112-17.

⁴⁸Commentary on *Ecclesiastes* (sermon 7), PG 44.731-32; Daniélou, pp. 126-29.

⁴⁹Cf. Epistle 38 (attributed to Saint Basil), trans. Roy J. Deferrari in *Loeb Classical Library* 1, pp. 206-07. Note how the root for “to know” (*γνω*) is consistently associated with the hypostases of the Trinity, and most specifically with the hypostasis of the Son.

⁵⁰Daniélou, p. 126.

⁵¹*De Vita Moysis*, ed. Herbertus Musurillo (Leiden, 1964), p. 91; trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson in *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York, 1978), p. 98.

the uncreated being of God takes place in the hypostasis of the divine Logos, through its union with our nature—this is of course the hypostatic union in later terminology. The relevance of all this for understanding Saint Gregory the Theologian is that the union of the divine Logos with human nature requires his union with the human mind, for the mind is the most essential part of man; it is that which by nature is created in the image of God, with the natural capacity to move in unending ecstasy in the infinite depths of God through union with the eternal, uncreated, divine hypostasis of the divine Logos in whom the incomprehensible divine nature exists. Man is not God by nature; his soul is not an emanating particle from the divine Logos of God. And yet, by nature, man, in his inmost depths, in his soul, is defined as a being in the image of God who contains a natural capacity to exist in communion with God. These two facts of man's nature determine the direction Christology must take for Saint Gregory. Since man is not God, but is made to receive God, his natural definition and destiny can be fulfilled only in an Incarnation in which the union of man with the divine Logos takes place in the inmost depths of his nature, in his mind.

Of further significance is, once more, the quiet transfiguration taking place in anthropological concepts under the influence of Christological confession. When applied to man, the divine image refers to authentic human nature; when applied to Christ, the divine image refers to the divine hypostasis of the divine Logos. In the union of the two contexts, the anthropological and the Christological, there emerges a distinction between mind and self which will enable Saint Gregory to affirm against Apollinaris the assumption of a full human mind by the divine Logos without thereby implying the assumption of a human self. This understanding will become determinative, even if it is not clearly expressed, for subsequent orthodox Christology, and will have the further impact of solidifying the fundamentally Hebraic inspiration of Christian anthropology, expressed in the categories of Neo-platonic thought.

The Christology of Saint Gregory the Theologian

The mature and complete expression of Saint Gregory's Christological doctrine is found in his two *Theological Orations* on the Son (*Orations* 29 and 30—written in 380 A.D. while he was bishop of Constantinople), and in two letters to the bishop Kledonios (Eps. 101 and 102—written in 382 A.D. from Nazianzos). His first letter

to Kledonios (Ep. 101) was adopted in part by the Synod of Ephesos, and *en toto* by the Synod of Chalcedon. These documents therefore will serve as the chief source for our study of Saint Gregory's Christology.

The Identity of Christ

For Saint Gregory, Christ, both in his human nature and in his divine nature, is one and the same divine Logos and not the meeting point of two different subjects (e.g. Jesus and the divine Logos). "For he whom you now condemn was above you; he who is now man was once uncompounded (Οὗτος γὰρ ὁ νῦν σὺν καταφρονούμενος, ἦν δὲ τὸ καὶ ὑπὲρ δὲ ἦν· ὁ νῦν ἀνθρωπός, καὶ ἀσύνθετος ἦν)."⁵² The "actor" who initiates all of Christ's activities and possesses all his different qualities, and the subject of attribution in Christ, whether contemplating him before, during, or after the Incarnation, is the divine Logos; to enter Gregory's vision of Christ is to gaze always upon the divine Logos.

The identity of subject in Christ governs even the most incidental of Gregory's expressions, so that when he differentiates between the two contrasting conditions in which the Christ exists, not even the particles of speech that he uses can be taken to imply a differentiation in terms of actor or subject of attribution. For example, immediately following the phrase just given from the first *Oration* on the Son (*Or. 29*), Gregory writes, "That which he was (ὅ μέν), he remained; whereas that which he was not (ὅ δέ), he assumed." The grammatical construction here contrasts the two different conditions of one and the same subject; it contrasts the natures, or the modes, in which the divine Logos exists as the Christ, but there is no alternating contrast between two different subjects.

Following this, Gregory shifts from focusing on the conditions in which the divine Logos exists, to the divine Logos as the same subject who himself performs both the divine and human actions of Christ. Accordingly, he brings in a different set of particles; not "μέν . . . δέ" but "μέν . . . ἀλλά." In so doing, he stresses the unity of subject and excludes any thought that there might be two different actors, one divine, the other human. There is one actor, the divine Logos, who does things both divine and human: "He was baptized (μέν) as man, but (ἀλλά) as God he loosed from sin; he was tempted as man (μέν), but (ἀλλά) he conquered as God." The same grammatical

⁵²*Or. 29.19, PG 36.100A, 1-2.*

construction continues, contrasting not different actors, but different actions performed by the same one. But now Gregory unveils the precise identity of the one subject: “He asked where Lazaros was laid, for he was man, but (ἀλλά) he raised Lazaros, for he was God. . . . As a lamb he was silent; but *he was the Logos.*”⁵³ “Who (did all these things—τίς?),” Gregory goes on to ask.⁵⁴ He answers, “He who transformed the water into wine [i.e. the divine Logos].”

Because Gregory sees in Christ only one subject, only one *qui*, the divine Logos, who is the sole actor (ὁ ἐνεργῶν) in both natures, there is not the least hesitation in ascribing either the passion of Christ to the Logos himself (“We were assumed and saved by the sufferings of the impassible One”)⁵⁵ or the death (“He dies, and yet he makes alive, and destroys death by his death”).⁵⁶ Later on, since Christ is himself the divine Logos, there will be no question in Gregory’s mind—when he turns quickly to cover his flank against the opponents of Apollinaris—as to the identity of Christ’s Mother: “If anyone denies that the holy Mary is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), he is separated from the Godhead.”⁵⁷ With these two affirmations, Saint Gregory stands as a predecessor of Saint Cyril and the Synod of Ephesos, and of the Neochalcedonians of the early sixth century, both of whom upheld “Theopaschism” and the title “*Theotokos*” as criteria of Orthodoxy, in order to expose any latent Nestorianism that might cling to those wanting to claim adherence to Apostolic tradition.

Accordingly for Saint Gregory, the Logos becomes man; he does not assume a man. This is clear from the fact that when Saint Gregory speaks of an assumption, he always speaks of the humanity or our denser nature, or terms similar to these; but when he speaks of the Christ as man he does not speak of Jesus as a subject distinct from the Logos, as do Diodore of Tarsos, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and their disciples, but he speaks of the Logos, who himself becomes

⁵³Ibid. PG 36.100Cff.

⁵⁴PG 36.101B 7. Compare this with St. John of Damascus’ description of the hypostasis as a someone (τίς), not a quality or a “what” (*Dialectica* 17, PG 94.581CD; see note 24).

⁵⁵Or. 30.5, PG 36.109B 5-6.

⁵⁶“Αποθήσκει, ζωοποιεῖ δὲ, καὶ καταλύει τῷ θανάτῳ τὸν θάνατον,” PG 36.101B 13 (notice again that the particle δὲ contrasts different actions performed by the same one; it does not signify a different actor).

⁵⁷Ep. 101 to Kledonios, PG 37.177C 4-5.

(γίνεται) man in his Incarnation.⁵⁸ Consequently, Saint Gregory will say that the Logos was two-fold in his Incarnation,⁵⁹ whereas the disciples of Diodore of Tarsos and Theodore of Mopsuestia will always attribute the two-foldness to the Christ, not to the Logos.⁶⁰ Even in his human nature, then, the Christ is the divine Logos. It is therefore not the Christ who exists in the form of the Logos, for he is the Logos; rather the Logos descends in order to exist in the form (or nature) of a servant.⁶¹ In the same terms, Saint Gregory writes, “It was the Son who in bodily form sojourned with us and it was he who was in this lower world.”⁶²

Two years later, when he writes against Apollinaris in his letters to Kledonios, the same insight will have crystallized into the oft-repeated phrase, “one and the same,”⁶³ referring to the divine Logos. The Christ, he writes, is not two “who’s” but two “what’s” which exist in the one who, the divine Logos: “To speak concisely, the Savior is made up of two things [or natures, ἄλλο μὲν καὶ ἄλλο]; he is not two ‘someone’s’ (οὐκ ἄλλος δὲ καὶ ἄλλος), for both [natures] are one in the mingling.”⁶⁴

Accordingly, when Saint Gregory speaks of the union of human and divine natures, he speaks of an assumption into the “self” (έαυτοῦ) of the divine Logos. For example, “In himself (ἐν έαυτῷ) he represented us and we were taken up and saved by the sufferings of him who is impassible;”⁶⁵ “he bore in himself (ἐν έαυτῷ) the whole of me that he might consume in himself (ἐν έαυτῷ) my in-

⁵⁸A good example can be found towards the end of the second *Oration* on the Son (*Or.* 30). The Son is the middle term who, by virtue of his Incarnation, receives names that are above, and names that are below. On the one hand the Son is called Logos and Christ because of the Godhead; on the other, he is called man because he became for all men everything that we are—body, soul, mind—except sin (cols. 121BC, 124AB, 132BC). Throughout his Christological writings, Saint Gregory is consistent in this tendency.

⁵⁹“τοῦ Λόγου δὲ καὶ γὰρ ἦν διπλοῦς,” *Or.* 30.8, col. 113A 13-14.

⁶⁰Friedrich Loofs, *Nestorius and His Place in the History of Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge, 1914), p. 79.

⁶¹*Or.* 30.6, col. 109CD: “As Logos, he is neither obedient nor disobedient, . . . but as the form of a servant, he condescends to his fellow servants, or rather his servants, and is formed in that [nature] which is different from him (καὶ μορφοῦται τὸ ἀλλότριον).”

⁶²Ibid. 121BC.

⁶³Ep. 101, PG 37.177B 8, 177B 13-14, 177C 1-2, 180A 4, 196A 9-10.

⁶⁴Ibid. PG 37.180A 7-14.

⁶⁵*Or.* 30.5; PG 36.100BC.

feriority.”⁶⁶ “And he became the new Adam for the sake of the old, and thus he made his own (*ἐαυτοῦ*) my disobedience.”⁶⁷ “He is called man that through himself (*δι’ ἐαυτοῦ*) he might sanctify man, and that by uniting what was condemned to himself (*πρὸς ἐαυτόν*), he might release the whole from condemnation.”⁶⁸

The use of such terms as “one and the same” (*εἰς καὶ ὁ αὐτός*) and himself (*ἐαυτοῦ*) rather than hypostasis to designate the subject of Christ is even more striking when one remembers that Gregory was very insistent on upholding the term *hypostasis* in the doctrine of the Trinity to signify the Son. As discussed above, however, the trinitarian application of the term *hypostasis* necessarily focuses on the outside of the particular in order to describe what one sees. But Saint Gregory, as should be clear by now, always looks on the inside of Christ and identifies him as the one divine Logos. Never does Gregory isolate the human nature as a separate subject of attribution; whether speaking of his human or divine qualities or actions, the one actor who possesses or performs them is the divine Logos. The term *self*, rather than *hypostasis*, therefore, is best suited for Gregory’s purpose in matters Christological, for it enables him to say whom he sees inside the Christ: one and the same divine Logos.

Now, if the Christ is one and the same “self”—i.e. the divine Logos—and if he has assumed a complete human mind, then what is the role of the human mind in Christ? How does one maintain one divine identity in a complete human nature?

Gregory’s Christology of the Human Mind and the Image of God

In fact, the Christology we have just presented, from Gregory’s two *Theological Orations* on the Son, shows that even before his encounter with Apollinaris, when Gregory turned directly to consider the role of the human mind in the Incarnation, Gregory’s understanding concerning Christ’s identity and the role of the human mind in Christ was already quite developed. In accordance with the modified Origenistic anthropology he shared with Saints Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, there was no question that the union of the Logos with His humanity had to take place in the mind, the most essential part of man which is most akin to God,⁶⁹ and which, because it has been

⁶⁶ *Or.* 30.6, col. 109CD.

⁶⁷ *Or.* 30.5, col. 108D.

⁶⁸ *Or.* 30.21, col. 132BC.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Ors.* 2.17 and 38.10, col. 321B 9f.

created in his image, is therefore able by nature to receive the Person of the Son, the natural image of God. “The Divine Image,” he writes, “was mingled with the form of a servant;⁷⁰ he took upon himself our denser nature, having converse with the flesh through the mediation of the mind;⁷¹ the Self-Existent comes into being, the uncreated is created, the uncontrollable One is contained through the intervention of an intellectual soul, mediating between the deity and the corporeity of the flesh.”⁷²

Clearly implied here is that the core of Christ’s human soul and body, in the deepest depths at the point of his identity or “self,” is the divine Logos. The divine Logos, as it were, does not attach a complete man alongside himself; he clothes himself in all the elements of human nature. He is the center, the actor, the ἡγεμονικόν of Christ. Since he takes a body and a noetic soul, and himself *becomes* man (“the Self-Existent comes into being, the Uncreated is created . . .”) it is implied that the ἡγεμονικόν lies deeper than the mind, that it itself is not the mind, but is the leader of the mind. The αὐτὸς of Christ is the Logos who becomes human mind, soul, and body, revealing that the mind is therefore not to be identified with the self.⁷³ Apollinaris, of course, saw this too, but he did not see the transfiguration of anthropological concepts that takes place when anthropology is set in the light of the Church’s Christological confession, and so he could not maintain the one identity of the Logos incarnate together with the affirmation of a full human mind assumed by the Logos.

Gregory understood the mind of man as the most essentially human element of the human composite.⁷⁴ It is that spiritual, intelligible element of human nature which is brought into being in the image of God, thereby defining man by nature as capable of receiving in his inmost depths the very “self” (αὐτός or Person of the divine image: “The Image of the archetypal Beauty, the immovable Seal, the unchangeable Image, the Definition and Word of the Father, came to his own image, and took on flesh for the sake of my flesh, and mingled himself with an intelligent soul for the sake of my soul, purifying

⁷⁰Or. 30.3, col. 105D 2.

⁷¹Or. 29.19, col. 100A 10.

⁷²Or. 38.13, PG 36.325C 2-4.

⁷³As already intimated here and there, as for example, in Philo, *De Somniis* 1.30-33; Winston, p. 149.

⁷⁴Ep. 101, PG 37.184BC: “τοῦ νοῦ, ὁ καὶ μᾶλλον ἀνθρωπος.”

like by like.”⁷⁵ As *imago imaginis*, it is the very definition of the human mind to be filled with the Person of the Son, the divine image, in whom man was created. Only when the divine Logos himself (αὐτός) becomes man by placing himself at the core of human being—in the mind—is the definition of man as man finally perfected.

When Gregory says, “The Image came to his own image,” or when he says, “Mind is mixed with mind as with that which is nearer and more akin, and through the mind which mediates between Deity and carnality, he is mixed with the flesh,”⁷⁶ he assumes two different connotations for image and mind. The mind or image that is divine refers to the Person or hypostasis of the Son, the other that is human refers to the human nature. Accordingly, in the union there is not a union of one person with another person (“we do not teach two someone’s, οὐχ ἄλλος δὲ καὶ ἄλλος”), but of the divine Person or “self” with human being. The Logos does not join himself to a man; he himself becomes man.

Therefore, Gregory refutes Apollinaris’ view that the assumption of a human mind by the Logos, because the human mind is by nature self-ruling, sets up an essential conflict in Christ between the mutable freedom of the human mind and the immutable governance of the Logos.⁷⁷ The perfection of the human mind in no way is threatened by the presence of the divine Logos, it is perfected, for as the image in whom the image is created, the human mind is in effect imperfect until it is mingled with the divine Logos, and thereby brought into subjection to him: “Our mind is perfect and commanding (ἡγεμονικόν) only with respect to our own soul and body; but it is not absolutely perfect, for it is a servant of God, and is subject to God; it is neither a co-ruler, nor does it share the same honor as God.”⁷⁸

This holds notable implications for anthropology, and Gregory distinguishes himself in that he appears to be the only one until Maximos the Confessor to carry over to anthropology the distinction between mind and self which is implied in orthodox Christology. He writes to Kledonios in a most interesting passage, “Observe, that I myself contain (οὐ αὐτὸς ἐχώρησα) soul, reason, mind, and holy spirit.”⁷⁹ Saint Basil, one recalls, looking at the mind in a primarily

⁷⁵ *Or.* 38.13, PG 36.325.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* col. 188A 3-5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* col. 184B 11-12. For the statement of Apollinaris, cf. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea*, frags. 150, 151 (“To Julian”), pp. 247-48.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* col. 185A 13-B 2.

⁷⁹ *Ep.* 101, col. 184C 1-3.

anthropological context, identified the ἐγώ as the rational principle of the soul, and thereby set forth the philosophical principle that would constitute the central problem for Christology.⁸⁰ Saint Gregory, however, has changed the perspective; viewing man from the light of his Christological confession, he sees in the mystery of human being the same distinction between mind and self that is implied in an orthodox doctrine of Christ. The mind is not itself the αὐτός, but is itself contained by the αὐτός and exists in the αὐτός. In this light, one looks back to the mystery of Christ to see that the Logos, in assuming the human mind, does not thereby assume a human αὐτός. He is one divine αὐτός in a complete human nature, and in this he perfects the natural definition of man.

But then what is the αὐτός?

In terms of the history of Christology, it is in fact the hypostasis. Although hypostasis will be defined in the textbooks as that which exists by itself, or as the particular (<αὐτομος>) as opposed to the common (οὐσία), or as individuating properties (ἰδική ιδιώματα), this is in fact not the notion of hypostasis shaping the formulation of orthodox Christology. The notion of hypostasis implicit in the definitions of Chalcedon and Second Constantinople is not the external notion that these definitions imply, but the internal notion of self (αὐτός) or identity.⁸¹ This comes out most clearly in the definition of Chalcedon, where the term αὐτός is repeated constantly in order to stress that the one actor who is the subject of Christ's different actions and qualities is one and the same Son of God:

We all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ to be *one and the same* Son, *the same* perfect in Godhead, *the same* perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, *the same* consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, *the same* of one substance with us as touching the manhead, like us in all things apart from sin; begotten of the Father before the ages as touching the Godhead, *the same* in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as touching the manhood, *one and the same* Christ, Son, Lord Only-be-

⁸⁰Homily 1.7, *Sur L'Origine de l'Homme*, SC 160, p. 183; see note 8.

⁸¹Possibly the inability of the Fathers to make this notion explicit is because the fundamental affinity of their notion of particularity with the psychology of Philo or Plotinos was obscured by the notion of hypostasis as primary substance which they adapted from Aristotle's *Categories*.

gotten, to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way abolished because of the union but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved, and concurring into one prosopon and one hypostasis, not as if Christ were parted or divided into two persons, but *one and the same Son and Only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ.*

In terms of modern philosophical understanding, it is clear on the one hand that in Eastern Christian thought, it is not to be identified with memory, or consciousness as is done in many Western philosophies, for these are all activities of the mind and therefore belong to nature. But on the other hand, precisely because the human αὐτὸς is constituted in nature as body and soul, and in its nature exists wholly as the *imago imaginis Dei*, it is impossible to know the nature of the self except in communion with the divine image, for the self finds its origin—its λόγος—in him, and therefore also its destiny.⁸²

The Christological distinction implied in the thought of Saint Gregory between mind, as part of nature, and self as the person or hypostasis in which the nature exists, carries important implications for anthropology, and contributes towards clarifying the distinctive Christian notion of theosis. Some reflections on the clarifications Gregory's Christology brings to anthropology will conclude the present study.

Saint Gregory's Contribution to Christian Anthropology

The distinction between mind and self which emerges out of the Christology of Saint Gregory shows how fundamentally Hebraic is his Neoplatonism. Since the self or person is no longer identified as the soul, the real man is not conceived as being joined to the body,

⁸²Saint Gregory of Nyssa writes that man's nature is not open to contemplation because he exists in the image of God, which is incomprehensible, *On the Creation of Man* 11, PG 44.156AB. Cf. Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, trans. Norman Russell (Crestwood, NY, 1989), pp. 30-42. This explains, from the Eastern Christian point of view, why the search for the nature of the self in modern philosophy leads first to the belief that the self cannot be known, and finally to the denial of the self altogether; these attempts are conducted wholly outside of faith in Jesus Christ as the divine Logos, the archetypal image of the image of God in man. See Risieri Frondizi, *The Nature of the Self: A Functional Interpretation* (New Haven, 1953), or Hywel Lewis, *The Elusive Self* (Philadelphia, 1982).

as though the body were an accidental appendage to the real man, but as containing both soul and body. The human self both transcends, and exists in, its human nature so that the whole composite is essential to the real man. Therefore, theosis is not simply communion of soul with the divine mind, leaving the body behind, but is rather a partaking of divine life (2 Pet 1.4), a participation in the uncreated energies which permeate the whole of man's being, transforming him, body and soul, by the renewing of his mind (Rom 12.2) into the fullness of the stature of Christ (Eph 4.13), through the union of the divine Logos himself with man in the deepest element of man's being, his mind.

In a strictly philosophical analysis, then, one might say that communion of human persons with the divine Persons of the Trinity in the Person of Christ takes place, as it were, through the human nature assumed by the divine Logos; it does not take place in the human person, for the divine Logos assumed human nature, not a human person. Thus, the communion is real; the human person remains distinct, for he is not absorbed into the divine nature. And yet precisely because in reality he exists in human nature, and is separated from human nature only in intellective abstraction, the human person is in the most intimate communion possible with the archetype, for he is in communion with the image in the deepest part of his nature, his mind.

Obviously, our neat philosophical categories are expressing an ineffable mystery—ineffable because the communion of which we speak is with the supra-comprehensible Trinity in the exact, natural image of God the Father. But the inability of our philosophical constructs to comprehend the mystery of communion reveals their real ontological purpose. For if all things were created in the natural image of God, then everything is in a specific sense *κατ' εικόνα*, and this defines the ontological purpose of everything in creation, including philosophical constructs, as being so many different kinds of “icons” of the one icon of the Father. That is to say, the ontological meaning of everything is to symbolize the Creator, to be vehicles of his Holy Spirit's life-giving presence. In this way, the whole of creation fulfills its natural definition in worshipping the Holy One of Israel.

When the Fathers, who were Greek, employed the philosophical categories of their own native culture in the service of Christological doctrine, they effected a transfiguration of those categories in which their real ontological meaning is perfected; in the service of Chris-

tian doctrine, they became intellective icons inclining the mind of man—the *xat' εἰκόνα*—towards the icon of God, the Son of the Father, Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind.

This implies, furthermore, that the basis for understanding Christian doctrine is not its philosophical formulation which points beyond itself, but the mystery of the Eucharist: communion with God in the Spirit of joy and thanksgiving. In the experience of Holy Communion, when I personally receive the Body and Blood of the divine Logos—not of Jesus united to the divine Logos, but of the divine Logos himself—I personally enter into communion with the Holy Trinity in the Person of the divine Logos. But in that communication given in the bread and wine which become his own Body and Blood, I remain myself, human in nature and identity, even while I become divine through partaking of the divine Logos himself, receiving the divine uncreated energies of God, which are bestowed graciously upon my whole being, body, and soul.

The proclamation of theosis by the Church therefore proclaims that each human person, created as *imago imaginis*, is able in the deepest, most intimate recesses of his being, to be filled with God himself and to partake of his uncreated life. This is theosis; it is intimate, loving communion with God. It transfigures the entire being, body as well as soul—for we are soul and body, not soul attached to a body. We remain personally distinct, but in the most intimate communion possible, because the nature which the divine Logos assumed, and in which he now exists, is the same nature in which I exist.

Moreover, since this communion is mediated through the mind which is not God by nature, the union of man with God is authentically experienced as *conscious* knowledge of God. Because the human intellect is not of the same nature as the “One,” but exists in the capacity to receive the “Three in One,” it is not absorbed through assimilation to its original source, but is perfected precisely in its distinctiveness. In communion with God, the mind is brilliantly illumined and made fully aware while its unique personal identity is perfected, since at his origin, man is not an emanating particle from some Plotinian soul or intellect, but he is brought into being from out of nothing and is made to exist from the very beginning as a creature in the image of God, so that the fundamental principle of his being is completed only in communion with God.

This reveals the mystery of the Incarnation as an act of divine

love. For Gregory this in turn reveals man's nature and destiny to be in loving communion with the Holy Trinity through the ecstatic, transcending movement of the self into the personal, divine life of God. Salvation as theosis is therefore the perfection of human nature and destiny; it is the knowledge of God in loving communion with him, God becoming man without ceasing to be God, so that man can become God without ceasing to be man.



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Παράδοξον Μυστήριον: The Thought of
Gregory the Theologian in
Byzantine and Latin Liturgical Chant

PETER JEFFERY

IN BOTH THE EASTERN AND WESTERN CHURCH, THE BIBLE IS THE most important source of texts chanted in the liturgy—particularly the Psalter and the Gospels.¹ Yet very many of these texts are derived from or inspired by other theological literature, among which the writings of Gregory the Theologian are particularly notable. The hymnody of the Eastern Church is full of passages, phrases, expressions, and ideas that can be traced back to Gregory—usually not to his unique and sometimes quite personal hymns, however, but to the profound orations that earned him the epithet “the Theologian.”² Thus liturgical chant was one of the media that served to spread the thought of Gregory the Theologian. Through the medium of liturgical chant, Gregory’s thought came to circulate even in the medieval West, as not only complete hymns, but also some of Gregory’s distinctive phrases and expressions passed from Greek to Latin and came to be sung in the liturgy of the Latin Church.

In the East, the adaptation of Gregory’s sermons for liturgical singing had already begun by the sixth century, when the archiman-

¹ The role played by the Bible, exegesis, and preaching in the creation of the liturgical chant repertoires is described in my forthcoming book, *Prophecy Mixed with Melody: From Early Christian Psalmody to Gregorian Chant*.

² Gregory’s influence on the poets of the Greek Church is traced in Jan Sajdak, *De Gregorio Nazianzeno Poetarum Christianorum Fonte*, Archiwum Filologiczne Akademji Umiejetnosci w Krakowie 1 (Krakow, 1917).

drite Dorotheos of Gaza cited two of them in his *Didascalia*.³ Oliver Strunk identified several others, and published the medieval melodies of two Easter troparia that no longer survive in the modern Byzantine liturgical books.⁴ With characteristically penetrating insight, Strunk also showed that these two troparia may have influenced both the text and melody of the famous Golden Canon of Saint John of Damascos,⁵ familiar to modern Protestants in the translation of John Mason Neale, "The Day of Resurrection."⁶

A particularly interesting, but so far less studied, chant text is the troparion Παράδοξον Μυστήριον, on the subject of the Incarnation, based on Gregory's *Oration 39* On the Holy Lights, section 13.⁷ It is still found in the Byzantine Menaion as an apostichon for Vespers on December 26, attributed to John the Monk.⁸ But it also occurs in the medieval Western liturgy, translated into Latin, as the antiphon *Mirabile mysterium*, sung to the ode of Zachary (Luke 1.68-79) at Lauds on January 1, the Octave of Christmas. The similarity between the Latin chant text and Gregory's homily was already known to the ninth-century Frankish liturgical commentator Amalarius of Metz,⁹ who knew Gregory's sermons through the Latin translation of

³ This was first noted by S. Pétridès in "Notes d'hymnographie byzantine," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 13 (1904), 421-28. See now Dorothée de Gaza, *Oeuvres spirituelles*, L. Regnault and J. de Préville, eds., SC 92 (Paris, 1963), pp. 458-87; Dorotheos of Gaza, *Discourses and Sayings*, trans. Eric P. Wheeler, *Cistercian Studies Series* 33 (Kalamazoo, 1977), pp. 220-33.

⁴ Oliver Strunk, "St. Gregory Nazianzos and the Proper Hymns for Easter," *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, Kurt Weitzmann, ed. (Princeton, 1955), pp. 82-87; reprinted in Strunk *Studies on Music in the Byzantine World* (New York, 1977), pp. 55-67.

⁵ The text, an English translation, and studies of the medieval melodies and notation will be found in Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1971), pp. 206-22, 264-65.

⁶ Neale's original translation can be found, for instance, in his *Hymns of the Eastern Church*, 3rd. ed. (London, 1870), pp. 92-107. The modern adaptation of it used in the Episcopal Church will be found in *Hymnbook 1982* (New York, 1982) number 210.

⁷ Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41*, Claudio Moreschini, ed., Paul Gallay, trans., SC 358 (Paris, 1990), pp. 178-79.

⁸ Enrica Follieri, *Initia Hymnorum Ecclesiae Graecae* 3, Studi e Testi 213 (Vatican City, 1962), p. 277. For an English translation see Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, *The Festal Menaion* (London, 1969), p. 291.

⁹ *Liber Officialis* 4, 32, 10, in Jean Michel Hanssens, *Amalarii Episcopi Opera Liturgica Omnia* 2, Studi e testi 139 (Vatican City, 1948), p. 508.

Rufinus.¹⁰ But the twin facts that the Latin antiphon was based on a Greek troparion, and that the troparion was in turn derived from Gregory's homily, were rediscovered repeatedly in modern times.¹¹ The texts of Gregory's oration and of the troparion are shown in parallel in Example 1. The troparion text has been translated this way:

Παράδοξον μυστήριον οίχονομεῖται σήμερον.
 Καὶ νοτομοῦνται φύσεις, καὶ Θεὸς ἄνθρωπος γίνεται.
 δπερ ἦν μεμένηκε, καὶ ὃ οὐκ ἦν προσέλαβεν,
 οὐ φυρμὸν ὑπομείνας οὐδὲ διαιρεσιν.

An astonishing mystery is accomplished today.
 Nature has been renewed and God becomes man.
 What he was he remained, and he took on what he had not
 been,
 Without being submitted to confusion or to division.¹²

But where and when did the troparion originate, and how did it find its way into the Western liturgy? On this opinions have varied greatly. Baumstark attributed the troparion to a layer of Greek hymnody that he would place chronologically between the kontakia of Romanos and the canons of John Damascene, a layer which would have had its home in Palestine rather than in Constantinople. It could

¹⁰ *Tyranii Rufini Orationum Gregorii Nazianzeni Novem Interpretatio*, August Engelbrecht, ed., CSEL 36/1 (Vienna and Liepzig, 1910), pp. 123-24.

¹¹ The dependence of the Latin antiphon on the Greek troparion was discussed at length by Anton Baumstark without reference to Casel's article or to Gregory's sermon. See "Byzantinisches in den Weihnachtstexten des römischen Antiphonarius Officii," *Oriens Christianus* ser. 3, 11 (1936) 160-87, especially 179ff. The connection with Gregory's sermon was then pointed out by Hieronymus Frank, in "Das Alter der römischen Laudes—und Vesperantiphonen der Weihnachtsoktag und ihrer griechischen Originale," *Oriens Christianus*, 36 [= ser. 3, Vol. 14] (1939) 14-18, esp. 16; Frank acknowledged that this fact had already been stated by Odo Casel in "Mysteriengegenwart," *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 8 (1928) 145-224, see 171 note 69. Louis Brou once again connected the antiphon and troparion with Gregory's sermon, as if the relationship had not been noticed before, in "Saint Grégoire de Nazianze et l'antienne «Mirabile mysterium» des Laudes de la Circoncision," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 58 (1944) 14-22, esp. 16-18. But Brou later admitted that the connection had already been stated by earlier French and Italian writers, going back to Prosper Guéranger in the nineteenth century. See Brou, "Les chants en langue grecque dans les liturgies latines," *Sacris Erudiri* 1 (1948), 165-80; especially the long footnote on 169-70.

¹² Wellesz, *A History*, p. 277.

then have come to Rome during the later seventh century, when there were several Greek-speaking popes of Syrian or Palestinian origin who had been trained in the Roman Schola Cantorum.¹³ Others sought to date the composition of this troparion even earlier, to the time of the Synod of Chalcedon¹⁴ or even before.¹⁵ As to the place of composition, Brou argued for “un milieu byzantin, ou peut-être cappadocien,” since the sermon itself was originally delivered by Gregory while he was Patriarch of Constantinople, about 381.¹⁶ Baumstark had already pointed out, however, that the text does not occur in the oldest manuscript of the *Typikon* of the imperial city, the Patmos codex of the ninth or tenth century.¹⁷

Due to the discovery and publication of new liturgical sources, the problem of origin can now be clarified to some extent. The original liturgical chant repertory of Jerusalem, inaccessible for centuries, can now be recovered from the Old Georgian translation that was made of it about the seventh century, and published in 1980.¹⁸ The fact that it includes neither Παράδοξον Μυστήριον nor the troparia cited by Dorotheos shows that they were not part of the original liturgy of the Holy City. At the same time, their absence from the *Typikon* of the Great Church demonstrates that neither were they part of the local rite of Constantinople.¹⁹ Since our earliest datable and localizable witness to such texts remains Dorotheos, it is probably best to conclude that it was in the milieu of Palestinian monasticism that Gregory’s homilies first came to be valued as sources of texts that could be sung in the liturgy. This also suggests that already by the sixth century there was at least one Palestinian monastic chant repertory that was distinct from the repertory of the urban rite of Jerusalem, and that was perhaps a more direct ancestor of the modern

¹³Baumstark, “Byzantinisches,” pp. 184-86.

¹⁴Brou, “Saint Grégoire,” 22.

¹⁵Frank “Das Alter” argues against this opinion, being more partial to Baumstark’s date.

¹⁶Brou, “S. Grégoire,” p. 22. On the dating of the sermon, see the preface to the Sources Chrétiennes edition, pp. 16-22.

¹⁷Baumstark, “Byzantinisches,” 181. The text of the Patmos MS and of later sources is now edited in Juan Matéos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église: Ms. Sainte-Croix n° 40, X siècle*, 2 vols., Studi e testi 165-66 (Vatican City, 1962-63). See the first volume, p. v.

¹⁸El. Metreveli, C. Çankievi, L. Xevsuriani, ed., *Uyelesi Iadgari* [The Oldest Iadgari] (Tbilisi, 1980).

¹⁹See the index of troparia in the second volume of Matéos *Le Typicon*, pp. 274-78.

Byzantine rite, in which some of the troparia derived from Gregory's sermons still survive.

How did the text of Παράδοξον Μυστήριον find its way West? Baumstark supposed that it might have come from the East directly to Rome, rather than, say, through northern Europe. It is plausible that such a thing could have happened during the late seventh century, when Rome was ruled by several popes of oriental origin. But Rome at this period was subject to Eastern influence from other quarters as well. There were, for instance, Greek-speaking monastic communities in the city, one of which even produced an illuminated manuscript of Gregory's sermons that still survives.²⁰ It is certainly plausible that a Greek chant of the monastic tradition could have come West through Greek monastic channels.

But such arguments cannot be confirmed so long as the evidence is merely circumstantial, and the whole question places us squarely in the middle of the central controversy of medieval chant research—the problem of the origins of and relationship between the two Roman chant traditions. For just as the modern Byzantine liturgy is a hybrid of practices from the monasteries of Palestine, the city of Constantine, and even of other centers, so the medieval and post-medieval liturgy we call “Roman” is actually a hybrid, incorporating material from the city proper along with other material that originated in the barbarian kingdoms of Italy, Spain, and northern Europe.²¹ The chant tradition that came to predominate, called “Gregorian chant” because it was attributed to Pope Gregory the Great (590-604), first emerges in manuscripts of the eighth and ninth centuries; despite the belief that this tradition was Roman, these earliest sources generally come from the Carolingian Empire, the region of modern France and Germany. On the other hand, the very small number of early chant manuscripts that survive from Rome itself, dating from the

²⁰Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana MS E 49-50 inf. See Jean-Marie Sansterre, *Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne (milieu du VI s. fin du IX s.)*, 2 vols., Académie Royale de Belgique, Mémoires de la classe des lettres, Collection in-8°, 2e série 66 (Brussels, 1983), vol. 1, 170-71, Vol. 2, 196-97.

²¹See my two forthcoming articles: “Rome and Jerusalem: From Oral Tradition to Written Repertory in Two Ancient Liturgical Centers.” *From Rome to the Passing of the Gothic: Festschrift in Honor of David Hughes* (Cambridge, MA) and “Jerusalem and Rome (and Constantinople): The Heritage of Two Great Cities in the Formation of the Medieval Chant Repertoires.” *Cantus Planus 2: Papers Read at the Fourth Meeting, Hungary 3-9 September 1990* (Budapest, 1990).

eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, demonstrate that the city of the popes followed a local chant tradition somewhat different from the familiar Gregorian chant, both textually and especially melodically. The relationship between this tradition—usually called “Old Roman chant” for lack of a better term—and the more widely circulated Gregorian chant is regarded by many music historians as “the central problem” of medieval chant study.

The task of sifting the early Gregorian repertory, sorting out the genuinely Roman elements from the material that originated elsewhere, has barely begun. But the relationship of the Latin antiphon *Mirabile mysterium* to its Greek original, Παράδοξον Μυστήριον, is in some sense a microcosm of the larger problem, for the Gregorian and the Old Roman appear to be the only Western chant repertoires that preserve it. Surviving evidence offers no suggestion that the antiphon was ever found in the non-Roman local traditions of the West, whether the relatively well-documented traditions of Spain,²² the generally more fragmentary chant traditions of Italy,²³ or the scarcely extant traditions of France. Our antiphon occurs only in the two traditions that purportedly represent the usage of Rome itself.

In the Gregorian chant tradition, first attested in the ninth century,²⁴ *Mirabile mysterium* is transmitted to us in the context of the Morning Office of January 1, along with a series of antiphons that have attracted much attention for their many resemblances to Eastern hymnody. Yet the group probably does not represent a homogeneous unit, as it would if, for instance, it had been composed of a single individual. This is because some of the individual antiphons circulated independently and more widely than the rest of the group, including *Mirabile mysterium*.²⁵ The Old Roman manuscripts, also, do not

²²It is not listed in Don M. Randel, *An Index to the Chant of the Mozarabic Rite* (Princeton, 1973).

²³It is not listed in the indices of Thomas Forrest Kelly, *The Beneventan Chant* (Cambridge, 1989), or Terence Bailey and Paul Merkley, *The Antiphons of the Ambrosian Office, Musicological Studies* 50/1 (Ottawa, 1989).

²⁴Besides the writings of Amalarius, cited above n. 8, see also the antiphonary of Compiègne, edited in René-Jean Hesbert, *Corpus Antiphonarium Officii I: Manuscripti “Cursus Ronamus”*, Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta, series maior: fontes 7 (Rome, 1963) 60, 62, first column.

²⁵For example, the two antiphons *O admirabile commercium* and *Rubum quem viderat Moyses* are found (but not together) in the Ambrosian rite, celebrated only in the area of Milan; see Bailey and Merkley, *The Antiphons* 209,221. *O admirabile* occurs among what seem to be excerpts from the Anglo-Saxon antiphonary of York

give us quite the same series of texts as the central Gregorian chant sources.

Example 2:

BYZ Ηταρδούον μυστήριον ακομπεται σημερον.

G1 Mi-ra-bile mysterium decla-ratur ho-di-e

G2 Mi-ra-bile mysterium déclara-ratur ho-di-e

G3 ... ho-di-e

OR1

OR2

BYZ καλ-ύο- τελεσται φρες, καλ θεός πρόβων γένεται.

G1 in-no-vantur nature Deus ho-mo factus est

G2 in-no-vantur nature Deus ho-mo factus est

G3 De-us ho-mo factus

OR1 In-no-vantur nature Deus ho-mo factus est

OR2 In-no-vantur nature Deus ho-mo factus est

BYZ τρεψ ηγεμονίκε, καλ δι εὐθ ηγε- νηπες

G1 si d quid fu-it permanxit et quid non erat assump-sit

G2 in quo fu-it permanxit et quid non erat assump-sit

G3 si d quid fu-it permanxit et quid non erat assump-sit

OR1 in quo fu-it permanxit et quid non erat assump-sit

OR2 in quo fu-it permanxit et quid non erat assump-tus

as it was known to Alcuin, edited in Radu Constantinescu, "Alcuin et les 'Libelli Precum' de l'époque carolingienne," *Revue d'histoire de la spiritualité* 50 (1974), 17-56, see 43.

Byz
G1
G2
G3
OR1
OR2

quoniam non dico uerbi
non commixtionem passus nego divisiōinem.
non commixtionem passus nego divisiōinem.
non commixtionem passus nego divisiōinem.
non commixtionem passus nego divisiōinem.

Let us look at the Greek and Latin texts and melodies themselves. Ex. 2 gives the texts and melodies of all the extant versions. The Byzantine melody in the top staff (labeled "Byz") was transcribed from medieval manuscripts by the eminent scholar Egon Wellesz,²⁶ ignoring the traditional ornamenting practice that Byzantine singers call "exegesis." The next two staves represent two different versions of the Gregorian chant melody—the first from a modern publication (labeled "G1"),²⁷ the second from a thirteenth-century English manuscript representing the Sarum use ("G2").²⁸ Ignoring the next staff for the time being, the last two staves represent the two twelfth-century manuscripts of the local Old Roman tradition: one from the archive of St. Peter's basilica at the Vatican,²⁹ the other perhaps

²⁶Wellesz, *A History*, pp. 277-82.

²⁷*Antiphonale Monasticum pro Diurnis Horis* (Paris, Tournai, Rome, 1935), p. 274.

²⁸Walter Howard Frere, ed., *Antiphonale Sarisburicense*, Plainsong and Mediaeval Music Society (London, 1901-24; repr. Farnborough, 1966), p. 79.

²⁹Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Archivio di San Pietro B. 79, f. 37v. The text of the manuscript was published in Giuseppe Maria Tommasi, *Opera Omnia*, Antonio Francesco Vezzosi, ed., vol. 4: *Responsoria et Antiphonaria Romanae Ecclesiae* (Rome, 1749; reprinted Farnborough, 1969), pp. 1-170.

from Saint John Lateran, Rome's cathedral.³⁰

The most striking textual disagreement is the fact that the Old Roman sources omit the first sentence of the Byzantine and Gregorian text, "An astonishing mystery is accomplished today," beginning instead only at the words "innovantur naturae," "natures are renewed." As there are no other essential differences between the Gregorian and Old Roman texts (despite some variants among the manuscripts), it is difficult to imagine how this major discrepancy could have arisen. At least it is clear that in this case the Gregorian text is closer to the Byzantine original, while the Old Roman has moved further away from it by dropping the opening sentence. We cannot prove that the Old Roman antiphon was based on or derived from the Gregorian one, but the reverse hypothesis (that the Gregorian antiphon is descended from the Old Roman) seems very unlikely.

As so often happens when we compare Eastern and Western chants transmitted with the same text, all the melodies are essentially in the same mode—in this case plagal G, the Byzantine plagal fourth mode, the Western mode 8. The Sarum melody ("G2") is only a partial exception, for though it ends on the pitch *E* (which would place it in the plagal E mode), it is associated in the manuscript with the eighth psalm tone. But identity of mode need not imply identity of melody, and in many cases of this sort the Eastern and Western melodies seem to have little in common apart from the mode. In the present case, however, there is greater agreement than in some others. Both the Byzantine and Latin melodies begin on *g*, rise to *c* on the first syllable of the word for "today" ("σήμερον," "hodie"), rise to *c* again on the word for "renewed" ("κατινομοῦνται," "innovantur"), descend to *a* on the word for "man" ("ἄνθρωπος," "homo"), sink even further on the word for "remained" ("μεμένηκε," "permansit"), returning to a cadence on *g* on the word for "took on" ("προσέλαβεν," "assumpsit"). All the melodies rise to *c* again during the penultimate phrase, descending to finish the last phrase with very similar cadence formulas, on the pitch *G*, the modal final or tonic.

But these general similarities of melodic direction are mostly typical of the plagal G mode, so that it could be argued that they do not prove the Latin melody to be directly dependent on the Greek. It is possible that the only strictly musical information to have passed from East to West was the assignment to the plagal G mode. It is

³⁰London, British Library, MS Additional 29988, ff. 33v-34r.

easy to see how this could have happened, for Greek liturgical books usually indicate the mode even when they are not supplied with neumes. The person who created the Western melody, perhaps knowing only the mode of the Eastern original, may then have developed a new melody that was not directly based on the Eastern one, but which because of modal constraints came to resemble it in a general way. But this degree of scepticism is unjustified. A Western G-plagal melody could have been much more different from the Greek model than this one is. Indeed, the Old Roman melody has been classified in one major study as bearing “insufficient resemblance to any of the stereotyped melodies to be assigned to one of the stereotype classes.”³¹ This means that the plan of this particular melody fits no pre-established pattern within the Old Roman repertory, and though there are a great many other melodies that do not do so either, the fact that they do not still requires explanation. In this case then, the likelihood seems to be that the Old Roman and Gregorian melodies do indeed follow, in a very general way, the underlying plan of the Byzantine melody.

Once it had entered the Gregorian chant tradition, however, *Mirabile mysterium* did not lie dormant, but continued to transmit the thought of Gregory the Theologian to new generations. Later in the Middle Ages, the succinct formulation of the Incarnation adopted from Gregory, “what he had been he remained, and what he was not he assumed,” was incorporated into a new antiphon for the Annunciation, *Haec est dies*,³² which has also attracted attention from modern scholars for its apparently Eastern traits.³³ This antiphon begins by paraphrasing Psalm 117:24 (LXX), “This is the day that

³¹Edward Nowacki, “Studies on the Office Antiphons of the Old Roman Manuscripts” (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1980) 43, 421.

³²Text and music are published in *Processionale Monasticum ad Usum Congregationis Gallicae Ordinis Sancti Benedicti*, [Joseph Pothier, ed.] (Solesmes, 1893, reprinted 1983), p. 147-48. Manuscript evidence suggests that *Haec est dies* originated more recently than the central corpus of Gregorian chant that includes *Mirabile mysterium*. For instance, *Haec est dies* occurs in St. Gall MS 390-91, the antiphonary copied by the monk Hartker (died 1011 or 1017), but on a page that was written out and added to the manuscript at least a century later. See *Paléographie Musicale* 2nd series “(Monumentale)” 1: *Antiphonale Officii Monastici écrit par le B. Hartker*, [André Mocquereau, ed.] (Solesmes, 1900), p. 10.

³³Louis Brou, “Les chants en langue grecque dans les liturgies latines,” *Sacris Erudiri* 1 (1948), pp. 165-80, esp. 168. This article was continued in “Les chants en langue grecque dans les liturgies latines: premier Supplément,” *Sacris Erudiri* 4 (1952), pp. 226-38.

the Lord has made,” though the day in question is Annunciation, not Easter (to which this psalm verse is usually made to refer). The antiphon continues, like many Eastern chants, with several clauses that begin with the word “Today:”

Today the Lord regarded the affliction of his people.
Today a woman drove away the death that a woman brought on.

And, in the words of Gregory the Theologian:

Today God was made man; that which he had been he remained, and what he was not he assumed.

It finally ends, again like many Eastern chants, by introducing a short refrain, in wording that once again recalls Psalm 117:24:

Therefore let us devoutly remember the beginning of our redemption, and let us exult, saying, Glory to you, O Lord.³⁴

The reason that no Greek original has been identified for this chant may be that perhaps there is none. The text may be instead a Western compilation of more or less Eastern-inspired elements, and the passage echoing Gregory may have been derived from the Gregorian antiphon *Mirabile mysterium*. This is suggested by the music, the relevant portions of which are included in Ex. 2 as melody “G3.” Though the melody of *Haec est dies* has an E plagal (Western fourth mode) character that tends to push it somewhat lower in pitch, it still tends to recall the melody of *Mirabile mysterium*, at least at the words “hodie” (with the skip *a-c*) and “fuit” (*G-a-a*), the last syllable of “erat” and the first of “assumpsit” (*F-E-D*). Thus the antiphon for Annunciation, rather than being a direct translation of a Greek chant, appears to be a Western composition, based in part on the earlier antiphon of the Christmas octave, from which it adapted the striking phrase of Gregory the Theologian, “What he was he remained, what he was not he assumed.” Even though the unknown

³⁴The Latin text reads: *Haec est dies quam fecit Dominus: hodie Dominus afflictionem populi sui resperxit, redemtionem misit; hodie mortem quam femina intulit, femina fugavit: hodie Deus homo factus, id quod fuit permansit, quod non erat assumpsit: ergo exordium nostrae redemtionis devote recolamus, exsultemus dicentes: Gloria tibi Domine.*

creator of *Haec est dies* may not have realized that Gregory was the original author of this phrase, his use of it to create a new antiphon is eloquent testimony that, even in the West, the words and phrases of Gregory the Theologian continued to be attractive to hymnodists, and the liturgical chant repertory continued to play a role in the transmission of his thought.



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‘Perceiving Light from Light in Light’ (*Oration 31.3*) The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Gregory the Theologian¹

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AT THE END OF THE FOURTH CENTURY, THE WORK OF SAINT ATHANASIOS had moved the great debate in Christianity concerning the nature

¹ Select bibliography on Gregory's trinitarian theology: A. *Opera* (English translations): A.J. Mason, *The Five Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus* (With Commentary), Cambridge, 1899; F. W. Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen* (Leiden/New York, 1991); C. Browne and J. Swallow, *Select Letters and Orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen* NPNF, ser. 2, Vol. 7, Text of Orations and Letters, pp. 101-02, 202, reprinted in E.R. Hardy, ed., *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Philadelphia, 1954); J. A. McGuckin, *Select Poems of St. Gregory Nazianzen* (Oxford, 1986).

B. *Trinitarian Studies*: H. Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz* (Münster, 1972); I.R. Asmus, “Gregor von Nazianz und sein Verhältnis zum Kynismus,” *Theol. Studien und Kritiken*, 67 (Gotha, 1894), 314-38; A. Benoit, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: sa vie, ses œuvres, et son époque* (Paris, 1876, 1973); H.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus, eds., *Neo-Platonism and Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge, 1981); J. Dräseke, “Neuplatonisches in des Gregorios von Nazianz Trinitätslehre,” *BZ* 15 (1906), 141-60; E. Fleury, *Hellenisme et Christianisme: Saint Grégoire et son temps* (Paris, 1930); P. Gallay, *La Vie de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (Paris and Lyons, 1943); J. de Ghellinck, “Quelques appréciations de la dialectique d'Aristote durant les conflits trinitaires du IVème siècle,” *RHE*, 26 (1930) 5-42; R. Gottwald, *De Gregorio Nazianzeno Platonico* (Diss Breslau, 1906); R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 676-737, 772-90; P. d'Hérouville, “Quelques traces d'Aristotelisme chez Grégoire de Nazianze,” *RSR* 8 (1918); K. Holl, *Amphilocius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den grossen Kappadoziern* (Tübingen, 1904); J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London, 1968), pp. 263-69; F. Leherz, *Studien zur Gregor von Nazianz* (Diss. Bonn, 1958); T.R. Martland, “A Study of Cappadocian and Augustinian Trinitarian Methodology,” *ATR* 47 (1965); E.P. Meijering, “The Doctrine of the Will and of the Trinity in the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzos.” *Ned. ThT.* 27 (1973) 224-34; G. Moreschini,

of God towards a new context. A greater degree of agreement about the nature and divine status of the Son could now be presumed after the reconciliation between the homoousians and the homoiousians. Events such as the Synod of Alexandria of 362 show that there was a movement to clarify the terminology of the argument in the cause of this reconciliation. The residual body of Arians were consequently becoming more sharply distinguished, and their theological systems stood out in harder relief, as might be witnessed in the rationalist method of Eunomios or Aetios. Athanasios' theology, after the Council of Nicaea, had initiated a growing body of opinion among the hierarchs that the generic meaning of the Logos as homoousios with the Father, in the sense of having the same generic quality (or even being of 'the same stuff'), was a crudely materialist concept inapplicable to a wholly spiritual and simple nature, and that by contrast the true meaning of the homoousion was not merely generic identity, or even 'likeness of being' as the Origenistic homoiousians liked to say (following their teacher's much earlier objections to the application of qualitative epithets to God), but rather very identity of being.

This progression from generic sameness of quality to absolute identity of being was bound to reopen the great questions about particular differentiation within the Godhead, that had so exercised the Church in the second and third centuries. At that period, through the work of the early Apologists, then of Hippolytos, Origen, Dionysios, Tertullian, and Novatian, an overall theological framework had emerged to delineate distinct subsistences within the unity of an absolutely

"Il Platonismo cristiano di Gregorio Nazianzeno," ASNSP, ser. 3, 4.4 (1974) 1347-92; B. Otis, "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System," DOP 12 (1955) 95-124; S.G. Papadopoulos, *Gregorios o Theologos kai ai Proupotheseis Pneumatologias Autou* (Athens, 1989); H. Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (La Roche sur Yon, 1925); J. Plagnieux, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze Théologien* (Paris, 1951); G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London, 1952); J. Quasten, *Patrology*, (Utrecht, 1975) 3, 236-54; R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford, 1969); T. Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Introduction à l'Étude de sa Doctrine Spirituelle* (Rome, 1971); H.B. Swete, *The History of the Doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Spirit* (Cambridge, 1876); ibid. *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (Cambridge, 1912); J.M. Szymborski, "Grégoire le Théologien disciple d'Athanase," PTAA, pp. 359-63; F. Trisoglio, *San Gregorio di Nazianzo in un quarantennio di studi* (1925-1965) (Turin, 1974); D. Tsames, *H Dialektike Physis tes Didaskalias Gregoriou tou Theologou* (Thessalonike, 1969); D.F. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation* (Philadelphia, 1979); H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 3rd edition (London, 1970).

single power—the monarchy of God. In the earlier Logos theology, however, the unity of the Godhead was secured, in the main, by the person and will of the Father, whose power and will were exercised in his Son and Spirit. In this schema the Son and the Spirit tended to be seen as progressively extrapolated from, and thus declining from, the initial and absolute cause. Consequently, a subordinationist theology of the Son and the Spirit was part and parcel of the whole conception. This first schematization, reached by the end of the third century, led inexorably to the Arian dispute. From the theological principles of the same Origen, Athanasios and Arius could draw radically different conclusions about the status and divine nature of the Son and the Spirit. At the end of the fourth century, however, in the later work of Athanasios and his younger heirs, the Cappadocian Fathers, the lessons learned from the Arian crisis were beginning to be systematically applied.

The notion of inferiority had been shown to be incompatible with ascription of deity, a term that should be used only in an unqualified sense or not at all. Thus, the settlement of divine unity on a subordinationist basis had been logically ruled out. Moreover, the Orthodox debate with Arianism had just as urgently insisted that the Son did not proceed merely from the will of the Father (implying, as the Arians thought, a voluntarist and accidental character in the Son's being) but rather was the natural generation of the Father. To the same degree as this point had been secured, however, the older Pre-Nicene scheme of positing the divine unity primarily on the basis of the will or power of the person of the Father had also been dislodged from its position as the main argument for the unity of God's being. In affirming the theological necessity of the Son's identity of being and status with the Father, the Orthodox theologians had brought themselves unfailingly to the threshold of a new theological task—no less than the complete restatement of the problem of unity and particularity in God.

Along with the lessons learned during the Arian debate, a new attention was discernible in the late fourth century to the wider issues of pneumatology, ascetical theology, exegesis, procedure, and doxology in the form of the development of liturgy that took place within this period. These movements were to provide a formative context for the theologians of the time. Part of the Arian movement, such as the Macedonians, nicknamed the *Pneumatomachoi* (Spirit-fighters) by Gregory, or those nicknamed the *Tropici* (Figurists) by Athanasios, had clarified their pneumatology in the same way they had clarified their

doctrine, and either denied the divine status of the Spirit (as they had that of the Son), or denied the existence of the Spirit as a separate reality, preferring to interpret scriptural references to it merely as a figurative way of denoting God's action in the world. The emergence of new groups of opponents in the late fourth century, such as Eunomians, Macedonians, and to a lesser extent Apollinarists, all served to clarify the nature of what the Orthodox reschematization of the unity of God would be.

Athanasius' *Four Letters to Serapion*² inaugurated the second stage of this great movement towards the full Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the Cappadocians were to bring it to a further resolution. M. Simonetti's criticism, that the era of the Cappadocians was one in which theological originality and creativeness had all too evidently declined,³ is an extraordinary evaluation of a period which witnessed the *Letters to Serapion*, Basil's *De Spiritu Sancto*, Gregory's *Theological Orations*, not to mention Gregory of Nyssa's ascetical and mystical theology, and the widespread elaboration throughout that century of the great liturgical matrices of theology, which witnessed to a primary biblical, Athanasian and Cappadocian thesis that theology, by its very nature, had to be doxological.

The distinctive Cappadocian contribution to the Christian doctrine of God, therefore, can be briefly summarized as, firstly, the completion of Athanasius' argument that generic or qualitative similarity in the persons of the Godhead had perforce to give way to the affirmation of absolute identity of essence; secondly, the elaboration of what was the basis of differentiation within that identical essence so as to constitute a recognizable and hypostatically distinct Triad wherein the distinctions were posited as relations; thirdly, the explanation of how the unity was preserved in the distinctions; and fourthly, the final elaboration and clarification of the work inaugurated by the Synod of Alexandria in 362, that is, the setting out of a clearly defined terminology of: nature (οὐσία), subsistence (ὑπόστασις), person (πρόσωπον), modes of being (τρόποι ὑπάρχεως), and the three divine properties (ἱδιώματα, ἴδιότητες) of unoriginateness (ἀγενησία), generation (γέννησις) and procession or promission (ἐκπόρευσις, ἐκπεμψίς), which hereafter constitutes the Orthodox theological language.

² Written 359-60 AD. Text: PG 26.529-676; crit. ed. J. Lebon, SC 15 (Paris, 1947). ET. C. Shapland, (London, 1951).

³ M. Simonetti, *La Crisi Ariani nel Quarto Secolo* (1975), pp. 459-61.

Gregory the Theologian's contribution to this theological achievement has been disparaged by a few European authors who seem to have had little primary contact with his extensive theological writings. G.L. Prestige patronizingly dismissed him as "a dignified popularizer," but has only minimal references to Gregory's trinitarian theology throughout a sizeable book devoted to the issue.⁴ Others have summarized his trinitarian doctrine by digesting the analogical images he offered to illustrate his theme, and have consequently presented him as offering no more than a generic theory of divine unity. This reliance on the analogical imagery wholly fails to take account of Gregory's explicit disavowals of the use of analogies (except to supply rhetorical color) on the grounds that they are all fallacious,⁵ and also demonstrates an extremely narrow reading of Gregory's text, since he returns to the exposition of the Trinity consistently throughout the considerable extent of the *Orations, Letters, and Poems*, and explicitly attacks this generic theory which they wish to read into him. Even sympathetic scholars have misinterpreted key aspects of Gregory's doctrine. From antiquity, Latin commentators failed to sustain Gregory's explicit distinction between ἀρχή and αὐτός which he so regularly applied, and so denied the validity of the Father being the 'causa' of the Son, while allowing that he was the 'principium.' The Latin tradition, while safeguarding itself against the Arian application of causality as an argument for the creaturely status of the Son, nonetheless obscured Gregory's ascription of causal origination as the inalienable proprium of the Father, and as such the Father's unique personal existence as ἀρχή of the Godhead. It was to prove the beginning of a long road of divergence. The obscuring of this important point has led to several eminent Latin theologians subsequently arguing, without foundation, that Gregory taught the Filioque doctrine.⁶

⁴ Prestige in *God in Patristic Thought* cites only four explicit references to Gregory's trinitarian thought, and in two of the instances he praises Gregory's acumen (qv. 140,260) thus *in situ* he contradicts his own assessment.

⁵ *Oration* 31.33; PG 36.172.

⁶ Cf. the Maurist editor to Gregory's works in the Migne Introduction (PG 35. 107-08), which says: "Although Gregory does not deal with the procession of the Holy Spirit there are, nonetheless, many instances in his writings from which it is permissible to conjecture that he would have thought that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and from the Son, as for instance Orat. 14.19, 'We adore the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Holy Spirit'; from which words it can be supposed that as the Son draws his substance from the Father, so the Holy Spirit draws his from the Son." Needless to say, this is not only a bad statement of the Latin Filioque

Despite the criticisms, derogations, misinterpretations, and a generally shameful lack of scholarly analysis devoted to Gregory in the main, the fact remains that for theological rigor and mystical insight Gregory the Theologian is in no way inferior to his great Cappadocian colleagues; whereas in the clarity of his exposition and the memorable vigor of his expression he is unquestionably their leading light. Gregory is the Aaron to Basil's Moses. And it is a role which he was pleased to fulfill for his old friend, to whom he once said:

From the first I have taken you, and will take you still, for my guide of life, and my teacher of dogma. If any man should ever sound your praise he would only find himself by my side, or following behind me.⁷

The present study sets out, on this occasion of the sixteenth centenary of the saint's death, to expose Gregory's trinitarian theology from the primary sources, and to comment on his depiction of the trinitarian relations within the context of his theology of the mystical ascent to God which serves as its matrix and prelude.

The Nature of the Vision of God

Gregory begins the theological task quite decidedly from the perspective that God is unknowable; that is, inconceivable ($\ddot{\alpha}\lambda\eta\pi\tau\circ\varsigma$) and incomprehensible ($\dot{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\rho\dot{\iota}\lambda\eta\pi\tau\circ\varsigma$) in his nature, and also radically,

doctrine in its own right, but a completely inadmissible interpretation of Gregory's real point which is the commonality of essence between the persons and the reciprocity of relation thereby engendered. Even more blatantly fallacious is the statement to the same effect in the eccentric book by B. De Margerie, a contemporary Roman Catholic theologian, *The Christian Trinity in History* (Petersham, MA, 1982), pp. 275-79, which uses Gregory's image of Adam, Eve, and Seth (*Oration* 31.11; PG 36.144-45) to demonstrate Gregory's supposed allegiance to the Filioque doctrine. In Gregory, the image shows how three individuals can all be homoousios while having different modes of origination. De Margérie misapplies the image in a crassly biological way, despite Gregory's explicit disavowal of such a biological connotation, to suggest that Seth (the Holy Spirit) is the result of the union of both Adam (the Father) and Eve (the Son). Even so sensitive an interpretation as the fine book by D.F. Winslow (*The Dynamics of Salvation*, p. 121) misunderstands Gregory on this central issue when it argues that "the procession of the Spirit, however, is beyond the categories of time, causality, or materiality." It is the first and third of these which Gregory denies. Causality is the Father's very proprium and the root of the inner dynamic of trinitarian relations. Winslow's supporting text reference for this argument (*The Dynamics of Salvation*, p. 121, fn. 3) is mistaken and should read: *Oration* 31.7.

⁷ Epistle 58; PG 37.113.

though qualifiedly, unknowable even in his actions towards creation.⁸ The apprehension of the deity, being pure spirit, is impossible for a materially based consciousness, and the only hope for human beings to have knowledge of God, therefore, is founded upon their ability to transcend material limitation, when the soul is invited back by God to its true spiritual nature and destiny ($\tau\acute{e}\lambda\omega\varsigma$) in communion with God. This economy of salvation, described as a purification and ascent, determines from the outset the radically ‘economic’ nature of theology for Gregory.

In the five *Theological Orations* (*Orations* 27-31), which Gregory delivered in the little house-church of Saint Anastasia at Constantinople in 381, he defines the nature of theology as an invitation to ascent given by God only to the purified and elected soul.⁹ It is an ascent which will already have been partially prepared by the individual’s purification through askesis, moral fidelity, and a life of prayer and reflection. In *Orations* 27-28 he sets out his methodological presuppositions on this theme quite explicitly. Part of the context of this argument is unquestionably supplied to Gregory from the fact that he is attacking Eunomians, the most reductionist and rationalist representatives of the Arian movement, but his starting point, from the unknowable mystery of God’s being, is indicative, and the overall thrust of his thought is evidently not solely reducible to his apologetic context here, but is something of a common perspective on the mystery of God and the mystical nature of theology which he shares with Gregory of Nyssa. The purification demanded of initiates before they begin to theologize is comparable, for Gregory, to that demanded of those who set foot on the mountain of God’s theophany at Sinai, and the task is just as dangerous.¹⁰ Indeed, this theme of the unapproachable mystery of God, which therefore determines both the character and scope of theology, is an *idée maîtresse* of Gregory’s work to which he returns time and again.

In the first *Theological Oration*,¹¹ Gregory follows Origen and begins his exposition by elevating the Apostle Paul as the paradigm of the theologian for two reasons: firstly, he is the preacher of the ‘abbreviated word,’ (‘bringing speech to an end and abbreviating it in righteousness, for the Lord shall set forth an abbreviated word

⁸ *Or.* 28.3; *Or.* 28.26-30; PG 36.29, 61f.

⁹ *Or.* 27.3; PG 36.13D-16.

¹⁰ *Or.* 28.2; PG 36.28; cf. Gregory of Nyssa’s *Vita Moysi*.

¹¹ *Or.* 27.1; PG 36.12.

upon the earth''),¹² that is, Paul follows the virtuous life which is God's summation of the theological quest,¹³ and thereby becomes both 'disciple and master of the fishermen';¹⁴ and secondly, because Paul receives his higher understanding of the ways of God by ascent and direct visionary experience in the third heaven¹⁵ (an ironical contrast Gregory wishes to make with the Eunomians, whom he regards as having picked up their theology at the street corners, and, far from having ascended to higher things, having actually stooped to the basest materialism in their conception of what the generation of the Son of God would involve). Paul does not deduce syllogisms about God's spiritual being from material, accidental reality, but reports on his direct experience "in the spirit" of an immaterial vision. This contrast between speculative and experienced theology is marked in Gregory.

If theology's task is to confess God accurately, then all material terms are to be avoided, which lead, as he says, to a certain "poverty" of Orthodox doctrine,¹⁶ in comparison to the aggressive speculative assaults of the wordy rationalists.¹⁷ By trying to pierce the divine nature by speculative syllogisms, such people, Gregory says, are "evilly assaulting God" on the basis of their passions, which they have mistaken for rationality,¹⁸ and are thereby profaning the great mystery of the deity which even pagan initiates would know how to preserve in reverent silence.¹⁹

He sums up his point in a famous passage:

¹²I.e. συντεμημένου λόγου, Rom 9.28, following the Septuagint text of Isaiah.

¹³See also *Or.* 27.7; PG 36.20: "Why have we tied our hands and armed our tongues?" i.e., given rein to endless speculation about God rather than pursuing the experience of God in the ways he subsequently lists—through mutual love, prayer, almsgiving, and so on. See *Or.* 26.19; PG 35.1252D: ὅσον εἰ, τωχὸν καταληφθούμενος, τοῖς ἐνταῦθα καλῶς ζητήσασι διὰ βίου καὶ θεωρίας. See also *Or.* 20.12; PG 35.1080; and PG 36.304.

¹⁴*Or.* 27.1; PG 36.12.

¹⁵*Or.* 27.9; PG 36.21-24.

¹⁶*Or.* 27.8; PG 36.21.

¹⁷*Or.* 27.1; PG 36.13: κυβισταὶ λόγων, word-jugglers—although the Maurist Editor gives a less polite translation in his footnote 17.

¹⁸*Or.* 27.7; PG 36.20-21: κατὰ Θεοῦ φέρωνται θρασύτερον ή ἀσεβέστερον.

¹⁹*Or.* 27.5; PG 36.17: "Let us at least agree on this: that we will utter mysteries under our breath, and holy things in a holy manner, and will not cast things that cannot be spoken under profane ears, or give evidence that we possess less gravity than the worshippers of demons." Gregory refers here to Mystery Religion initiates.

Not to all men, my friends, does it belong to philosophize about God . . . for it is permitted only to those who have been tested and are far advanced in contemplation, and who have been previously purified in soul and body, or at least are in the process of being purified. For indeed it is not safe for the impure to touch the Pure, just as it is not safe for weak eyes to gaze upon the sun's rays.²⁰

This is an image he uses frequently. It is like the ascent of Sinai to the luminous theophany. But just as Moses could not look upon God directly, so no human perception can gain direct access to the nature of God in himself. His nature is deducible only by the reflected glory it leaves in its works of creation, what Gregory calls our “vision of the sunlight diffracted on the surface of the water,” or the “hinder parts of God,” that is the reality of God which the Incarnation and created order mediate for us.²¹

In the second *Theological Oration*, Gregory lists the major Old Testament theophanies such as given to Enoch, Jacob, Elijah, Ezekiel, and also the visions of Peter at the Transfiguration,²² and Paul’s ascent to the third heaven (*Or. 28.17-20*), to demonstrate the point that, since the vision of God itself is so unsupportable, how much more will the reality of God be unapproachable, something that cannot be reduced to the vision.²³ Gregory states that no human being has ever discovered (οὐτε τις εὑρεν ἀνθρώπων πώποτε) what God is by nature and essence (τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν) and asks whether it will ever be possible to discover it,²⁴ suggesting that such a ‘finding’ of the reality of God may be more fully realized in the heavenly life:

When that which is within us which is godlike and divine, I mean our mind and reason, shall have ascended to the archetype, of which it now has the desire.

The greater extent of the discovery of God’s reality in the heavenly life is a theme to which Gregory frequently returns.²⁵

²⁰*Or. 27.3; PG 36.13-16.*

²¹*Or. 28.3; PG 36.29.*

²²For a complete patristic dossier on the Transfiguration exegesis, cf. J.A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition* (New York, 1986).

²³*Or. 28.19; PG 36.49D.*

²⁴*Or. 28.17; PG 36.48.*

²⁵*Or. 29.11, PG 36.88CD; Or. 29.21, PG 36.104B; Or. 24.19, PG 35.1193; Or. 25.16,*

This fuller knowledge will be possible by personal union with God on a more profound basis than that which is attainable by earthly beings. This illustrates Gregory's general theme that theology is ultimately not a speculative *theoria* that produces knowledge from deduction, rather a personal communion with God which initiates by intimation or sanctification. The angels in Gregory's thought, as more thoroughly spiritual beings (second natures from the first) already possess a fuller apprehension of God's reality than humans.²⁶ Following Origen, Gregory speaks of them as inhabitants of the inner recesses of the "Tabernacle." They are the intelligible creation who stand within the outer veil (which covers the vision and approach of all sensible creation) and enjoy the incomparably greater glory of God's radiant nature.²⁷

Gregory describes the advance of the theologian who has been given the gift of such an ascent as a partial glimpse behind the outer veil of sensible reality. He means that the virtuous life of the initiate, the essential ascetical preparation for theology without which ascent would not be possible, actually serves to evoke, in part, the next age. For askesis quietens, simplifies, and prepares the soul for contemplation, and this is an image of the next age when the human condition will be radically simplified, when it will transcend all motion and division, and when it will receive God "in the heart" as it is finally "made like to God."²⁸

But while allowing that there will be a fuller "discovery" of God's nature than is possible on earth, Gregory consistently maintains the absolute unknowability of God's essence in itself. Even the angels who stand inside the outer curtain cannot penetrate that "inner veil" of Cherubim which covers God's inmost being. The "First Nature," as it is in itself, is known only to itself as Trinity.²⁹ To this end Gregory makes a specific correction to Plato's thesis on the obscurity

PG 35.1221C; Carmina 1.2.10 (lines 90-95), PG 37.687; Carm. 2.1.85 (lines 13-16), PG 37.1432.

²⁶Or. 28.31, PG 36.72; Carmina 1.1.3 (De Spiritu); PG 37.415.

²⁷Or. 28.3; PG 36.29A.

²⁸Or. 30.6; PG 36.112: ὅλοι θεοειδεῖς, ὅλου Θεοῦ χωρητικός καὶ μόνου· τοῦτο γάρ ἡ τελείωσις πρὸς ἓν σπεύδομεν.

²⁹Or. 28.3; PG 36.29: οὐ τὴν πρώτην τε καὶ ἀκήρατον φύσιν, καὶ ἐαυτῇ λέγω δῆ τῇ Τριάδι, γνωσκομένην, καὶ ὅση τοῦ πρώτου καταπετάσματος εἴσω μένει, καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν χερουβίμιν συγχαλόπτεται. Also Or. 6.13; PG 35.749C-52.

of the knowledge of God:

As one of the Greek teachers of divinity taught: It is difficult to conceive God, but to define him in words is an impossibility (*Timaeus* 28E). He did so quite cleverly in my opinion; for he intended that he would be regarded as actually having apprehended God, in so far as he says that it is a hard thing to do, and yet he intends to escape being convicted of ignorance because of the impossibility of giving expression to his apprehension. In my opinion, however, it is impossible to express God, and even more impossible to conceive him.³⁰

And this explains Gregory's advocacy of "negative theology,"³¹ characterizing God by what he is not as part of that "poverty" of speech and doctrine that will always typify the Orthodox understanding of God, which ever insists on his essential incomprehensibility.³²

Gregory's doctrine of theological penury, however, is far from being tantamount to inarticulateness. The Spirit himself inspires the theologian to use few words and fewer images, but this is an economy that finds its voice in worship and confession,³³ because the very unapproachability of God, the awesome holiness behind the veil, directs and stimulates the creation to worship. It is, therefore, not surprising that some of Gregory's most important Trinitarian expositions are hymns of praise, especially in the *Carmina*. Gregory demonstrates the doxological stimulus in the following:

Adorable unity in trinity, and trinity recapitulated in unity;
entirely venerable, entirely regal, of the same throne and glory,
transcendent and timeless, uncreated, invisible, untouchable,
uncircumscribable. It has its own inner order known to itself
alone, but to be venerated and equally adored by us. It alone
enters the Holy of Holies while all the creation remains outside.³⁴

It is a theme which probably takes its inspiration, via Origen, from Romans 8.26-27, where Paul teaches that the Spirit's inspiration of

³⁰*Or.* 28.4; PG 36.29.

³¹*Or.* 28.9; PG 36.36-37.

³²*Or.* 28.10; PG 36.40.

³³*Or.* 31.33, PG 36.172; *Or.* 25.17, PG 35.1221C.

³⁴*Or.* 6.22 (De Pace 1); PG 35.749-52.

prayer transcends words since the realities encountered in worship exceed their limited scope. The power that propels the human mind to theologize properly, then, is no less than the Spirit himself,³⁵ and the process is synonymous with the sanctification and deification of the race. In a beautiful passage in the *De Moderatione*, Gregory tells how theology, properly done, spurs on the theologian, who is more ready to listen than he is to speak, to the deeper love of God himself.³⁶ It is a “longing” for divine communion which is inexhaustible, for the rational mind “faints to transcend corporeal things and consort with the incorporeal,”³⁷ since this is the very purpose of life and the point to which it properly gravitates.³⁸ We may sum up these contextualizing remarks, therefore, by saying that, for Gregory, theology (and particularly trinitarian theology) is wholly confessional, that is, doxological, in character and soteriological in its import.

The Christian Apprehension of God as Trinity

The preceding remarks on the nature and scope of the theological task form the matrix of all that Gregory has to say on the Holy Trinity. If one tries to separate his doctrine of the Trinity from this context, one wholly falsifies the teaching. Those who reduce Gregory down to a purveyor of trinitarian formulae or an originator of new technical terms fail to comprehend his insight. For Gregory, the Trinity is a dynamic and soteriological experience, the beauty of God experienced in the liturgy of prayer and expressed in the Church’s confession of praise. It is a saving mystery which draws the soul on in an ascent whose range and power ever increases,³⁹ but whose formularies do not ever increase, but, on the contrary, become fewer in accordance with their interiorized profundity of communion with the object of their vision.

To approach trinitarian doctrine outside this nurturing context,

³⁵Or. 29.1; PG 36.73: τῷ ἀγίῳ θαρρήσαντες Πνεύματι.

³⁶Or. 32.21 (*De Moderatione in Disputando*); PG 36.197C.

³⁷Or. 28.13; PG 36.44: οὕτω κάμνει ἐκβῆναι τὰ σωματικὰ δὲ ἡμέτερος νοῦς, καὶ γυμνοῖς ὅμιλησαι τοῖς ἀσωμάτοις, ἔως σκοπεῖ μετὰ τῆς ἴδιας ἀσθενείας τὰ ὑπέρ δύναμιν. Ἐπει ἐφίεται μὲν πᾶσα λογικὴ φύσις Θεοῦ, καὶ τῆς πρώτης αἰτίας.

³⁸Carmina 2.1.88; PG 37.1442.

³⁹Carmina 2.1.17 (lines 35-38); PG 37.1264: Ἀλλὰ νόν καθαροῖστι νοήμασιν αἰὲν ἀλέκων, ηδὸν καὶ Τριάδος ἀπτεται οὐρανής, ἡς τύπον ἐστήριξεν ἐνὶ τραπέζεσσιν ἔησι, κύθος ἐν ἐν Τρισσοῖς κάλλεις δερχόμενος . . .

as Gregory had argued with the Eunomians, renders theology into an abstract, sterile, and ultimately arrogant exercise of impiety. The Christian doctrine of Trinity, in Gregory's estimate, is therefore not an exercise in speculative metaphysical language, but an exposition of how the Church has experienced God and, as such, how it prays. And this is exactly why the final elaboration of trinitarian thought in the hands of the Cappadocians proceeds from doxology.⁴⁰ This was the fundamental thesis of Basil's *De Spiritu Sancto*, which in turn followed the lead of Athanasios' *Letters to Serapion*,⁴¹ in which he had elevated the Spirit's role in the regeneration of baptism, and his sanctifying power over all creation, as a primary argument for the Spirit's hypostatic deity.⁴²

Gregory suggests that he has been pushed unwillingly to theological discourse on the Trinity, purely because of the way heretics have profaned the mystery by perverting true doctrine.⁴³ Yet, once he entered the lists himself, he made a supremely lucid statement of the Orthodox position, and in the process distinguished it radically from prior philosophical and Arian presuppositions. Let us now examine his teaching on the unity of God's being and the differentiation of the divine hypostases.

The Unity of the Divine Being

The key argument in the Arian denial of the Son's full divine status was the fact of his generateness. Ingenerateness ('Αγενητός), regarded by the Arians as synonymous with unoriginateness (ἄναρχος Θεός), was consistently applied as the primary definition of the absolute deity. The same argument was used to rule out the possibility of the Spirit's deity, who also derived from the ingenerate God. Gregory's reply to this was that ingenerateness cannot be used as the supreme definition of deity since it is not a term that describes essence or nature, but rather depicts relation.⁴⁴ As a negative word, it does not say what something is, but rather how it is not. This 'how' depicts a mode

⁴⁰The vision of God inexorably issues forth in confession: *Or.* 28.21; PG 36.53C.

⁴¹PG 26.529f.

⁴²Serapion: "He in whom creation is made divine cannot be outside the Godhead of the Father." *Ad Serap.* 1.25.

⁴³Ep. 101, To Cledonius; PG 37.192C.

⁴⁴An idea suggested in Alexander of Alexandria, and explicated by Basil of Ankyra and Epiphanius: q.v. I. Chevalier, *S. Augustin et la pensée grecque: Les Rélations Trinitaires*.

of being, or what Aristotle called a relation (*πρός τι*).⁴⁵ The term is thus a particular qualification of God's essence, not its determinant and constituent.⁴⁶ This insight finally terminated, in the Cappadocian system, the long prior tradition of subordinationism within Christian thought, and constituted the final victory of the refined doctrine of the Son's consubstantiality with the Father as a sharing of no less than identical being.⁴⁷

Athanasius had already argued that the Spirit's relation to the Son was analogous to the Son's relation to the Father,⁴⁸ and by 359 he was ready to state that not only is the Spirit not a creature but he is, moreover, himself consubstantial with the Father and the Son. But Athanasios did not directly apply the title 'God' to the Holy Spirit, and Basil followed both him and Origen in this reserve (the so-called 'economy of Saint Basil'). Basil's pneumatology clearly implied the divine status of the Spirit. That the Spirit is not a creature is abundantly clear for Basil,⁴⁹ but he avoided the direct application of the Homoousion to the Spirit,⁵⁰ although he did speak briefly of a "community of essence."⁵¹

For Gregory, the time of reserve is over. He explains the apparent hesitancy of Basil on the grounds that he was hard pressed in the fight against antagonistic hierarchs, who would have used any more explicit a pneumatology in their fight against him.⁵² This is an explanation Athanasios himself acknowledged in the letters of support he wrote on Basil's behalf to the monks.⁵³ As early as 372, Gregory called the Spirit "God" in a public sermon, and asked how long this doctrine would be like the light "kept hidden under a bushel."⁵⁴

⁴⁵ *Metaphysics* 5.15.1020b, 30; Basil follows the Aristotelian distinction in his interpretation of Hebrews 1.3 in Ep. 38.7, PG 32.337, describing the relations as eternal.

⁴⁶ See Basil, *Adv. Eunomium* 2.9, PG 29.588-89; Amphilochios of Iconium, *Fragm.* 15, PG 39.112.

⁴⁷ The predication of *Homoiousios* was rejected by Athanasios (*De Decretis* 23, *De Synodis* 53), and by Basil (Ep. 8.3) on the grounds that the term 'like' can be predicated only in terms of quality, whereas God is free of any quality, being simple and immaterial. For Gregory, 'likeness' in a simple being meant 'identity': *Or. 30.20*; PG 36.129C.

⁴⁸ Ad Serap. 3.1; PG 26.625.

⁴⁹ Ep. 125.3, PG 32.549; Ep. 159.2, PG 32.620-21; and *De Spiritu Sancto* passim.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Adv. Eunomium* 3.4-5; *De Spiritu Sancto* 41-47, 58-64, 71-75; Ep. 189.5-7.

⁵¹ Ep. 189.7.

⁵² Epp. 58-59, PG 37.113-20; *Or. 43.68-69, In Laudem Basillii Magni.* PG 36.585-89.

⁵³ Athanasios, Epp. 62-63.

⁵⁴ *Or. 12.6*; PG 35.849. See also footnote 60 below.

The fifth *Theological Oration* (*Or.* 31) marked the high water mark of explicit trinitarian thought when both consubstantiality and the divine title were attributed to the Spirit openly and robustly:

What then? Is the Spirit God? Most certainly so. Well then, is he consubstantial? Yes, if he is God.⁵⁵

Where the Arians had posited as their cardinal theological terms unoriginateness and unbegottenness, Gregory argues that consubstantiality and homodoxy are the real focuses.⁵⁶ The explicit avowal of the consubstantiality of the persons opens for Gregory the way to a fuller clarification of the heart of Basil's doctrine. He regards it as the real meaning of Nicene Orthodoxy, although he has no apologies for "completing in detail what was incompletely said by the Nicene Fathers concerning the Holy Spirit . . . since that question had not then been mooted."⁵⁷

His remarkable statements on the developing economy of the revelation on the Son and Spirit, through the biblical accounts and in the life of the Church, demonstrate at one and the same time that he is fully conscious of being the active heir to an explicit biblical and patristic tradition,⁵⁸ yet one that in his own lifetime was profoundly controverted on all sides of the Church.⁵⁹ He regarded it as his special task to light the lamp on the stand for the benefit of all the churches. It is a revealingly liturgical idiom.⁶⁰

With great frequency in the *Orations*, Gregory posits the commonality of *Ousia* as the base and ground of the unity and coequality of persons in the Godhead, thus shifting the focus, in the light of all that had been learned in the Arian conflict, of the prior trinitarian tradition of the Apologists, which located divine unity predominantly in the will and monarchy of the Father. They had advanced the notion of unity from alignment of will; for Gregory, it is the other way around, insofar as commonality of being demands synonymity of will.

⁵⁵ *Or.* 31.10, PG 36.144A; *Carmina* 2.1.14, PG 37.1247-48; *Carm.* 2.1.30, PG 37.1290.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Or.* 23.6-7; PG 35.1157-60; *Or.* 42.16 (*Supremum Vale*); PG 36.476-77.

⁵⁷ *Ep.* 102; PG 37.193.

⁵⁸ *Or.* 31.5-6, PG 36.156; *Or.* 31.26-29, PG 36.161f.; *Or.* 31.3, PG 36.136; *Or.* 21.35 (on Athanasios), PG 35.1124-25; *Or.* 43.67-68 (on Basil), PG 36.585-89; *Or.* 39.12 (on Paul), PG 36.348.

⁵⁹ *Or.* 31.5-6, PG 36.137-40; *Or.* 31.30, PG 36.168; *Or.* 33.16, PG 36.233; *Carmina* (*De Vita Sua*) 2.1.11 lines 653f., PG 37.1074.

⁶⁰ *Carmina* 2.1.14, PG 37.1249.

In the third *Theological Oration* (*Or.* 29) he makes a synopsis of the point:

We hold the (theological opinion of) monarchy in honor. It is, however, a monarchy that is not limited to one person (prosopon) for it is possible for unity if at variance with itself to come into a condition of plurality; but it is a unity that is made of an equal dignity of nature and a union of mind and an identity of movement and a convergence of its elements to unity (a thing which is impossible to a created nature), so that even if they are distinct in number they are not divided in being.⁶¹

Aristotle had argued⁶² that numerical distinction primarily designated material realities. In this regard Gregory had to answer a double Arian criticism; firstly, that if the persons really were consubstantial they would be the same thing and so could not be enumerated as three; secondly, that if the persons were wholly spiritual, numerical distinction could not apply. His reply⁶³ was that the concept of number does not properly refer to the nature of things and thus can have no bearing on consubstantiality. That is, number expresses quantity, not quality, and thus the notions of unity and distinctions can properly be applied in the Godhead. Because of the simplicity of the uncreated and immaterial nature, however, the elements (the persons or hypostases) never constitute a summation of three or even a reduction to one. The inner unifying dynamic of the trinitarian relations in a unicity of being prohibits that kind of univocal differentiation which normal numbering suggests:

The Trinity is not an arithmetical numbering of unequal things . . . but a comprehension (σύλληψις) of the coequal and the equally-honored, and as they are united by nature (φύσις) they are named as a union. Thus, what is ignorant of all separation must never be divided by numerical division.⁶⁴

The commonality of being, for Gregory, demanded the coequality

⁶¹ *Or.* 29.2; PG 36.76.

⁶² “All things that are many in number have matter” (*Metaphysics* 12.8.1074a, 33-34). See also Plotinos, *Enneads* 5.1.9 (Aristotle, however, also spoke of the many immaterial substances that moved the spheres). Basil is aware of the issue and suggests that God is not one by numerical unity, for this would list him in the series of created things: q.v. Basil, Ep. 8.2; PG 32.249.

⁶³ Cf. *Or.* 31.18-19; PG 36.152-56.

⁶⁴ *Or.* 23.10 (De Pace 3); PG 35.1161.

of the persons in power, glory, honor, commonality of will, and identity of movement in all God's external dealings. This doctrine he never tires of restating, calling it not Aristotelian but "piscatorial" wisdom.⁶⁵

Numerical separation, therefore, is a way that materially-based intellects represent the real distinctions in the Trinity, which are exactly known only to the Trinity itself,⁶⁶ but it is not an entirely accurate guide since in its artificial analysis it theoretically presupposes a static separation⁶⁷ in what cannot be separated ontologically because of its own internal dynamic and essential oneness. Ultimately, Gregory says, the perfect concord of the deity is entirely "devoid of quality, quantity, and time."⁶⁸ The threefold relations which exist within that oneness of being are thus not antagonistic to the unity but actually express it as well as qualify it.

In a trinitarian catechesis in his *Oration on Holy Baptism*, Gregory speaks of three infinities comprising one infinite conjunction, where three can be discerned in "theoria" but in effect only one shines out, in just the same way that a threefold light forms one single radiance.⁶⁹ The dynamic unity, he suggests, is like that of Nous, Logos, and Pneuma that constitute our human consciousness, though as ever he distances himself from all trinitarian images as ultimately unreliable.⁷⁰ In this doctrine of the trinitarian convergence to unity,⁷¹ Gregory even begins to sketch out the shape of the doctrine of *Perichoresis*, which Gregory of Nyssa will elaborate further,⁷² before it reaches its final form in John of Damascus.⁷³

Commonality of being thus constitutes the ground of trinitarian unity:

Each of the persons possesses unity not less with that which is united to it than with itself, by reason of the identity of essence and power.⁷⁴

⁶⁵Or. 23.12; PG 35.1164C.

⁶⁶Or. 23.11; PG 35.1161.

⁶⁷Ibid. PG 35.1164: τοῦ νοῦ χωρίζοντος τὰ ἀχώριστα.

⁶⁸Or. 23.11; PG 35.1164.

⁶⁹Or. 40.41; (*In Sanctum Baptisma*); PG 36.417.

⁷⁰Or. 23.11, PG 35.1164; Or. 31.33, PG 36.172.

⁷¹Or. 23.11, PG 35.1164: ἐστη συμβαίνουσαν; also Or. 31.14, "One mingling of lights," PG 36.149; Or. 42.15, PG 36.476B; Or. 29.2, PG 36.76. See footnote 98 below.

⁷²In a text wrongly attributed to Basil as Ep. 38.8.

⁷³Cf. *De Fida Orthodoxa* 1.8; PG 94.829.

⁷⁴Or. 31.16; PG 36.152: τῷ ταύτῳ τῆς οὐσίας καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως.

And in this argument he lays to rest the ghost of the so-called ‘Generic Theory’ of trinitarian unity. This is a notion which has frequently been ascribed to all the Cappadocians, and a point on which they have attracted criticism from the time of Harnack. Critics point especially to some of the analogies used by Gregory of Nyssa which liken the trinitarian unity to that possessed by three men who all share but one single manhood,⁷⁵ or the teaching of Basil on the common generic substrate applicable to several hypostases,⁷⁶ such as Peter and Paul being two differently named individuals who both have the same ousia. This tendency in Basil and his brother rises from their common reliance on Origen at this point, who, under Aristotle’s influence, had posited a qualified generic model of the Trinity.⁷⁷ Basil himself was aware of the great difference between two men sharing generic unity and the case of the Trinity, where the entire substance of the Son and the Spirit is the same as the entire substance of the Father, trinitarian differentiation being only in the manner in which the identical substance is objectively presented in each person.⁷⁸ Gregory of Nyssa is also aware of the problems of his image, and rather weakly suggests we ought to refuse to admit that, strictly speaking, there is more than one ‘human being’ at all, only “human persons.”

Gregory the Theologian, however, is not as ready to follow Aristotle’s lead in the concept of ‘second substances’ as generic categories, and more so than his colleagues, is impatient of trinitarian analogies precisely because they can lead to more problems than they resolve. Consequently, he is able to state what Basil and his brother meant (which is clear enough, if one disengages their wider argument from the rhetorical images that illustrate it) with a far greater clarity, and he

⁷⁵Cf. the opening paragraph of Gregory’s *Ad. Ablabium*. ET. given in J. Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3, pp. 285-86.

⁷⁶Basil, Ep. 236.6; PG 32.884: “*Ousia* and *hypostasis* have the distinction that the common (*tò κοινόν*) has with reference to the particular (*tò ξαθ' ἔχοντος*), just as the term animal has with reference to an individual man.” For a fuller elaboration of Aristotle’s five categories of union (three of which are ‘generic’) see Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, p. 314f.

⁷⁷For Origen, the three hypostases were not merely individuals but three real individual species whose unity consisted in a commonality of term that denoted both species and genus, both of which they realized in themselves. This he called “specific genus” and he identified it with Aristotle’s “Second Ousia.” Origen also further qualified the bond of unity in terms of identity of will; cf. *In Joannem* 13.36; PG 14.461; Con. Celsum 8.12. See Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 320-22.

⁷⁸Basil, Ep. 38.5; see Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 244.

makes the conclusion quite openly that generic theories of unity are not a Christian but a Hellenistic concept, and fail to function as theological models because they connote merely a theoretical unity without regard to the eternal simplicity and unicity of power and will in God:

Do not the Hellenes also believe in one Godhead, as their more advanced philosophers declare? And in our case humanity is also a unity, that is, the entire race. But still the Hellenes have many gods, not one; just as there are many men. But in this example the common nature has a unity which is only conceivable in thought, and the individuals are parted from one another very far indeed, both by time and by dispositions, and by power. For we are not only compounded beings, we are also contrasted beings both with one another and with ourselves; nor do we remain entirely the same for a single day . . . but are in a perpetual state of flow and change.⁷⁹

Gregory's point, when he so argues that each of the persons is no less united with the others than with himself, demonstrates his pressing of the implication of identity of essence⁸⁰ to its logical end — that no distinction is possible or conceivable in the Godhead in terms of being, volition, action, power, glory, degree or status, and hence none admissible in the confession and worship of the Church. But having stressed the unity and monarchia of the Godhead to this pitch, significantly more so than Basil, Gregory goes on also to explain the distinctions in the Godhead which do not allow Christians to adopt an undifferentiated monism.

The Differentiation of Persons

His succinct statement — that there is complete identity in all things within the Trinity except for the relations of origin⁸¹ — marked a further advance on Basil, who described the individual properties (proprium of existence — ὑδιάζον ὑπάρχεως) in the Godhead⁸²

⁷⁹ *Or.* 31.15; PG 36.149.

⁸⁰ *Or.* 30.20: ταῦτον καὶ' οὐσίαν, PG 36.128D; *Or.* 20.7, PG 35.1073.

⁸¹ *Or.* 34.10, PG 36.251-52; *Or.* 20.5-7, PG 35.1072A, 1073A; *Or.* 31.29, PG 36.165; *Or.* 41.9, PG 36.441. Gregory insists the titles are descriptions of relations, not nature, and hence the disparity of names does not imply disparity of essence among the three hypostases: *Or.* 42.15, PG 36.476-77.

⁸² Basil, Ep. 38.6, PG 32.338. The term is borrowed from Aristotle, *Topica* 5.1.128b, 16-21; *Ibid.* 5.5.134a, 28f. q.v. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 338-39.

as “modes of existence” (*τρόποι ὑπάρχεως*); that of the Father as ἀγέννητος, and that of the Son as γεννητός,⁸³ but preferred to keep silent on the ἰδίωμα of the Spirit, which he suggests will not be known until the next age.⁸⁴ He will only say that the Spirit “is known after the Son, and with the Son, and has his substance from the Father,”⁸⁵ or that “he is sent from God and sustained by the Son.”⁸⁶

Gregory, however, articulates all three ἰδιότητες in the deity as ἀγεννησία, γέννησις, καὶ ἐκπόρευσις, alternatively ἔκπεμψις, or τοῦ προελθόντος ἢ προϊόντος used participially.⁸⁷ He is quite aware that he is coining new terms in Christian theology to describe the Spirit’s ἰδιότης, even though they are biblically based (Jn 15.26), but begs his reader’s license as the clarification of the argument demanded such measures.⁸⁸ And now, with three referents to denote the distinctions within the deity, he is able to clarify further what they are. Although he partly coins the vocabulary, he frequently expresses that he is more concerned with substantial agreement in the Church than with semantic exactness. If the overall meaning was the same, it did not concern him what precise terms were used,⁸⁹ as long as the basic distinction between nature (*οὐσία, φύσις*) and individual property (*ὑπόστασις, πρόσωπον, ἰδιότης*) was observed, following the lines laid down by the Synod of Alexandria on Athanasios’ prompting.⁹⁰

⁸³Basil, Ep. 38.4, PG 32.332; *Adv. Eunomium* 2.28.

⁸⁴*Adv. Eunomium* 3.6-7. PG 29.668.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶*Adv. Eunomium* 3.6, following Athanasios, *Ad. Serap.* 1.21,24; see also Jn 14.26; 15.26.

⁸⁷*Or. 25.15-16*, PG 1220, 1221; *Or. 26.19*, PG 35.1252; *Or. 30.19*, PG 36.128; *Or. 39.12*, PG 36.348; *Carmina* 1.2.10, lines 988-90, PG 37.751.

⁸⁸*Or. 39.12*; PG 36.348: εἰ δεῖ τι καὶ καινοτομῆσαι περὶ τὰ ὄντα . . .

⁸⁹*Or. 42.16,17*; PG 36.477.

⁹⁰The ‘Tomus Ad Antiochenos,’ PG 26.795-810, defining the basic distinction as that of one *ousia* and three *hypostases*: “A holy Trinity, not in name only, but really existing and subsisting . . . a Father . . . a Son and a Holy Spirit. . . . A holy Trinity but one Godhead and one principle . . . while the Holy Spirit is not a creature but proper to and inseparable from the essence of the Father and the Son.” See Gregory’s reference to this in his Encomium of Athanasios in *Or. 21.35*, PG 35.1124-25. The *Tomus*, together with the remarkable creed of Gregory Thaumaturgus (c. 213-270), were important influences on the Cappadocians. The latter creed, venerable in Cappadocia as attributed to their great Cappadocian saint, stated that there was nothing created or subservient in the Trinity, nothing externally contributed, nor was the Son less than the Father or the Spirit less than the Son. See *Ekthesis Pisteos*, PG 10.1103-24. The text is cited by Gregory Nyssa in his *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus*.

Gregory's starting point in explaining the significance of the ἴδιότητες is the Father's unique, personal, and incommunicable character as origin (*ἀρχή*) and cause (*αἰτία*) of the Godhead in the other two hypostases. As such, the Father alone is the Unoriginate and Uncaused, and there cannot be a plurality of principles (*ἀρχαι*) in the Godhead which would be tantamount to polytheism.⁹¹ Gregory denies Plato's suggestion that the principle of divine unity lies in the divine nature itself, and consequently is naturally inexorable. He insists, on the contrary, that it is a personal communication of the divine nature to the Son and Spirit, timeless, immaterial, and incomprehensible.⁹²

If, in Gregory's thought, the commonality of nature is the ground of trinitarian unity, the Father's personal communication of his essence, entirely and without reserve, to the Son and Spirit, must be seen as the origin and principle of that unity, and the timeless initiation of those mutual relations which constitute it. This act of the Father's self-communication specifies who the Father is; in other words, it specifies or hypostasizes the Godhead (divine *ousia*) as Father in the act or relation of fathering; just as the Son and Holy Spirit are specified or hypostasized in Godhead in turn by being begotten and by being sent from the Father. The Father, then, in the very particularization of himself (his individual expression of his own being) originates the very particularizations of his Son and Spirit, and thereby unfolds the whole Trinity, for the two other hypostases each concretize that being which is from him — his being and theirs — by returning that relation of generation and procession, being his Son and his Spirit respectively.

Gregory emphasizes two key elements in this understanding of the Father as *ἀρχή* and *αἰτία* of the Godhead. The first of these is that the act is timeless; it has no temporal beginning, duration, or end, although it has an origin of logical order in the eternal person of the Father. As a timeless origin, therefore, the Father's relation to the Son and Spirit cannot be said to involve priority in any temporal sense.⁹³ The second is that the origination is wholly spiritual, devoid of the notions of passion, extrapolation, and division which

⁹¹ *Or. 31.14*, PG 36.149A; *Or. 25.16*, PG 35.1221; *Carmina 1.1.3*, PG 37.414-15.

⁹² *Or. 29.2*, PG 36.76; see also *Or. 25.17*, PG 35.1224A, where Gregory states that just as generation does not imply passion, so procession does not imply necessity in the relations.

⁹³ *Or. 29.3*, PG 36.77; *Or. 29.5*, PG 36.80.

the Arians read into the act.⁹⁴ In consequence, the Father's relation to the Son and Spirit cannot be said to involve any priority in the sense of superiority or inferiority.

It is the Father's hypostasis as ἀρχή, then, which is the Primary Cause initiating the differentiation of otherwise entirely coequal and undifferentiated persons who timelessly share the same being:

How then, if they are co-eternal (*συναΐδια*) are they not all unoriginate (*ἄναρχα*)? It is because they are from him, not after him. For that which is unoriginate is eternal, but that which is eternal is not necessarily unoriginate so long as it may be referred to the Father as its origin. Therefore, in respect to cause they are not unoriginate; but it is evident that the cause is not necessarily prior to its effects, just as the sun is not prior to its light. Nonetheless (the Son and the Spirit) are in some sense unoriginate (*ἄναρχοι*)⁹⁵ in respect of time, even though you (Arians) would scare the simple-minded with your quibbles; for they are not subject to time from whom time came to be.⁹⁶

Gregory's final qualification highlights his argument with the Arians to the extent that unoriginateness (*ἄναρχος*, *ἀγεννησία*) constitutes divinity. *Ἀγεννησία* is posited as the unique hypostatic *ἰδιότης* of the Father, which characterizes him as the sole ἀρχή of the Godhead. But in so far as it is a timeless ἀρχή, then the Son and Spirit, while not being unbegotten or unoriginate (*ἀγέννητος*, *ἄναρχος*) as the Father is, still share his timelessness⁹⁷ and thereby 'image' his unoriginate-ness, just as they do not share his unique character as begetter and processer but image it in their own hypostatic relations to him as begotten and processed. Gregory is not only stating that they share all the characters of the Father's being (by possessing that same being) with the exception only of the mode in which it was communicated to them, he has even gone on to suggest, in a highly original manner, that even the mode is partially reflected in the internal self-communication of the Trinitarian relations. It is another indication

⁹⁴Or. 29.4; PG 36.77.

⁹⁵That is, *ἄναρχος* as timeless and eternally subsisting.

⁹⁶Or. 29.3; PG 36.77.

⁹⁷Cf. Or. 20.7, PG 35.1073; Or. 25.15, PG 35.1220; Or. 39.12, PG 36.348; Carmina 1.1.2 (De Filio), PG 37.401-04; Carm. 2.1.14 (35), PG 37.1247-48.

that he is one of the first to sketch out the doctrine of Trinitarian *Perichoresis*.⁹⁸ The Son's imaging of the Father was a longstanding Christian tradition; Gregory's originality lies in his extension of that principle to the Spirit, which he brings about in a subtle and remarkable passage in *Oration 25*, where he speaks of the Father in his hypostasis as being a father in a five-fold way: μόνως, μόνος, μόνου, δόλος, and δόλου.⁹⁹ These qualities he goes on to discern also in the way the Son and Spirit express their own hypostatic properties. He insists, however, at the end of this argument, on the unconfusion of the idiomata of ἀγεννησία, γέννησις and ἐκπόρευσις as the proper and distinct propria of the three hypostases. A similar line of thought is discernible in his argument that the Son in his origination from the Father is not a "decession" from the Father's glory but an "accession." By this he does not mean that the Son completes anything that is lacking to the Godhead, since the perfect cannot be improved, but that a direct and natural origination from such an Absolute is no diminution, despite what the Arians had argued, precisely because it must be absolute itself.¹⁰⁰

This process of origination and reciprocal relation is the dynamic order (*τάξις*) which is not only the very constitution of the Trinity but its whole meaning. And in its light the whole Trinity is seen from the outset as the communion and gift of God's being from the Father to the Son and the Holy Spirit. As such, it is the archetype and paradigm of God's economy of salvation for the entire creation, angels and mankind, which yearns for the experience of communion with the life of God, in so far as this is given; for this is its very life and salvation. To deny or disrupt this *τάξις* was the fundamental error of the Arians, and to Gregory it was a radical dishonouring of God,¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ See note 71, which has already suggested Gregory's anticipation of *perichoresis* doctrine; see also Ep. 101, PG 37.184, where he speaks of intellectual existences "mingling" with one another; also Carmina 2.1.85, PG 37.1432; and *Or. 29.2*, PG 36.76, where he describes the Trinity moving from monad to dyad and coming to rest in triad. This is based on Plotinos, *Tractates* 5.1 and 5.2. The text is discussed in Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 867-68. For further elaboration of Gregory's relation to Plotinos, see Moreschini, Plagnieux, and Draseke. A summary (Greek) is provided by Papadopoulos, *Gregorios ho Theologos kai hai Protopotheis Pneumatologias Autou*, p.89f.

⁹⁹ *Or. 25.16*; PG 35.1221.

¹⁰⁰ *Or. 29.11*, PG 36.89; also *Or. 30.7*, PG 36.112; Carmina 1.1.2 lines 28-31, PG 37.404.

¹⁰¹ *Or. 23.6*, PG 335.1160B.

that resulted in alienation from the deity,¹⁰² and the very opposite of doxology. To refuse to honor the Trinity, he says, is to refuse its gift and effect, that is, to refuse regeneration.¹⁰³

And so, while commonality of being and identity of will and movement constitute the one Godhead,¹⁰⁴ the irreducible properties or hypostatic relations make known the Trinity and evoke worship:

We guard that noble legacy which we received from our fathers (2 Tim 1.14), worshiping the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; knowing the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Holy Spirit, for in them we were baptized and have believed. . . . The three are not one in the sense that they are not impersonal realities or designations of only one person, but again they are one, yet not in hypostasis but in Godhead. There is unity worshiped in trinity and trinity recapitulated in unity; entirely venerable, entirely regal, of the same throne and glory, transcendent and timeless, uncreated, invisible, untouchable, uncircumscribable. It has its own inner order known to itself alone, but venerated and worshiped by us. It alone enters the Holy of Holies while all creation stands outside.¹⁰⁵

Gregory states unequivocally that while the fact of the hypostatic relations is known to creation and elicits its worship, the ‘how’ of the relations is absolutely incommunicable outside the Godhead. Just as the divine *ousia* is only known in its secondary reflections in the creation, so too is our knowledge of the divine hypostases radically limited.

The modes of being, or the manner of the Father’s ingenerateness, the Son’s generation, and the Spirit’s procession, cannot be scrutinized beyond stating the fact of them; otherwise, Gregory says, one incurs the danger of a man looking directly into the sun and being blinded.¹⁰⁶ It is an image which again evokes the theophany narrative of Sinai—the radiant light too bright to be seen, and Gregory turns once

¹⁰² *Or.* 34.9, PG 36.249; see also *Or.* 43.30, PG 36.537—to worship the Trinity is the only saving doctrine.

¹⁰³ *Or.* 23.12, PG 35.1164C; *Carmina* 1.1.13, PG 37.411.

¹⁰⁴ *Or.* 32.5, PG 36.180: apart from the properties there is “in all a sameness of nature, a common throne and honor”; *Or.* 23.11, PG 35.1161-64; *Or.* 40.41, PG 36.417; *Or.* 31.9, PG 36.144, and frequently elsewhere.

¹⁰⁵ *Or.* 6.22, (De Pace 1); PG 35.749-52.

¹⁰⁶ *Or.* 20.9-10; PG 35.1076-77.

more to the idea in the third *Theological Oration* where he speaks of the cloud that veils the holy from sight:

The generation of God (the Son) must be honored by silence. It is a great thing for you to learn that he was begotten, but the manner of his generation we will not admit that even angels can conceive, much less you. Shall I tell you how it was? It was in a manner known to the Father who begot and the Son who was begotten. Anything more than this is hidden by a cloud and escapes your dim sight.¹⁰⁷

Epilogue

The created order standing outside the veil of the Holy of Holies, or, as above, standing in the face of the dark cloud that veils the *Shekinah* as at Sinai or Thabor, culminates Gregory's entire trinitarian exposition in a refusal to go further. And yet, in a sense, we have come full circle from our starting point, in the way that both images rise from the theophany narratives of the scriptures, for Gregory intends to suggest that the next appropriate stage of the theophany is not further articulations and more analyses, but the silence of worship and communion that transcends speech (Rom 8.26-29), which as Paul says is that communion with the Spirit which reveals for us the regenerative power of the Son, the true image of the unseen Father. This is what Gregory means by his succinct phrase, "Perceiving light (the Son) from light (the Father) in light (the Holy Spirit)."¹⁰⁸

In so far as he has expounded the reality of God as the Father's total communication of his being to the Son and Spirit, whose internal relations order and particularize that single and common reality in mutual communion, then Gregory has also sketched out the entire goal and focus of the Christian life as a personal communion with God that is experiential and not merely theological—a vision of the threefold radiance shining as one light, when eyes have been sufficiently purified to gaze upon that light.¹⁰⁹ This vision of the luminous Trinity is, for Gregory, a dynamism in life that draws the creation unceasingly to desire a complete unity with God ("οδη Θεότητι μυγέντα), a transfigured communion that is initiated and sustained

¹⁰⁷ *Or.* 29.8, PG 36.84; *Or.* 23.11, PG 35.1161D; *Or.* 25.16, PG 35.1221C.

¹⁰⁸ *Or.* 31.3; PG 36.136.

¹⁰⁹ *Carmina*, 2.2.4, lines 85-88, PG 37.1512; *Or.* 32.15, PG 36.189.92.

in doxology:

O Spirit who proceeds from the Father, the radiance of our minds, who come to the pure to divinized illumined men, have mercy and grant as the years roll on that even now and in the future I may be wholly joined with the Godhead and sing your praises with a boundless joy.¹¹⁰

This dynamism draws onward the intelligible creation in an endless circling of the Primal Light which is its origin and final goal,¹¹¹ and draws forward the human soul to a more profound illumination and deepening communion, the ascent of the holy mountain that begins in this age and is completed in the next.¹¹²

Gregory's trinitarian doctrine originates in a primary and profound soteriological imperative, and this is also where it culminates in a concept of illumination and salvation which is no less than a divinizing communion with the God the church has begun to worship in its present trinitarian confession, but in whom its worship will be rendered speechless and entirely experiential in the final manifestation of his light in the heavenly liturgy. Without this context and conception of trinitarian theology as primarily a soteriological and doxological confession, Gregory's point can be, and frequently has been, entirely missed.

¹¹⁰Carmina 2.2.1 lines 630-34; PG 37.1017.

¹¹¹Carmina 2.1.98; PG 37.1415-52.

¹¹²Carmina 2.1.87; PG 37.1434; Carm. 2.1.88; PG 37.1442; Or. 28.17; PG 36.48; Or. 28.13; PG 36.44; Or. 32.15; PG 36.189-92; Or. 40.37; PG 36.412D.



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**Πολυπραγμοσύνη and Μυστήριον in
Gregory the Theologian's *Orations* 27-31:
Knowledge and Community in
Late Antique Constantinople**

RICHARD LIM

THE CAPPADOCIAN BISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE FROM 379-381 WAS known in the Byzantine tradition as “τὸν θεολόγον Γρηγόριον,” an appellation that was firmly set in place after the mid-fifth century.¹ Gregory's most notable claim to this title is based on a series of orations which he delivered (around 380) in a Constantinopolitan *domus* that was converted into a church (later named Anastasia).² In these speeches, the new leader of the Orthodox Christian community in the imperial capital not only gave a definitive expression to his trinitarian views, but, even more significantly for the present discussion, he articulated the proper qualifications of a Christian θεολόγος and defined how one should go about philosophizing the divine.³ He explains:

¹ See Philostorgios, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5, 3, 2; GCS, Bidez/Winkelmann, ed., 111-12; *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, E. Schwartz, ed. (Berlin/Leipzig, 1935), 3, 114; and J. Plagnieux, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze théologien* (Paris, 1951).

² On the Anastasia church, see Socrates Scholastikos, *Historia ecclesiastica* V, 7; Nazianzen, *De vita sua* 583-606; also R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin, I: Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarchat oecuménique* (Paris, 1953), pp. 26-29. On the date of the orations, see J. M. Szymusiak, “Pour une chronologie des discours de S. Grégoire de Nazianze,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 20 (1966), pp. 183-89, esp. 186, 189.

³ The Greek text I am relying on is P. Gallay, ed., *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 27-31 (Discours théologiques)* Sources chrétiennes 250 (Paris, 1978); I shall quote from the English translation by L. Wickham and F. Williams, in F. Norris, ed., *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning. The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*. Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 13 (Leiden, 1991)—this excellent

Discussion of theology (*τὸ περὶ Θεοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν*) is not for everyone, I tell you, not for everyone—it is no such inexpensive or effortless pursuit. Nor, I would add, is it for every occasion, or every audience; neither are all its aspects open to inquiry (*ἐν θεωρίᾳ*). It must be reserved for certain occasions, for certain audiences, and certain limits must be observed. It is not for all men, but only for those who have been tested and have found a sound footing in study, and, more importantly, have undergone, or at the very least are undergoing, purification of body and soul.⁴

How are we to understand this admonition and its underlying ideology within the historical context of fourth-century Constantinople? I will begin this task first by heeding Gregory's advice to avoid the philosophizing of God. Instead, I will attempt to situate this intellectual concern in the social world of late antiquity.

First, the identity of the putative audience whom Gregory warned not to philosophize publicly about God ought to remain for us an open question. Nowhere within the orations is there any direct reference to an opponent group defined by a common dogmatic position or by a religious label.⁵ Despite this lack of internal evidence, these orations are nevertheless traditionally understood as directed against the Eunomians or Anomoeans in Constantinople.⁶

work is received just prior to the final preparation of my MS so that not all of its suggestions could be incorporated; see also J. Barbel, *Gregor von Nazianz. Die Fünf Theologische Reden. Testimonia*, 3 (Düsseldorf, 1899). Though these orations are now collected as a set which, from a theological and dogmatic point of view, form a rather satisfactory whole, it is important to note that they did not all belong to an original series of delivered speeches. *Or. 28* is generally considered a later addition, included when the five were published as a body, see Gallay, ed., 7-9. *Or. 31* is generally considered as having been composed against the supporters of Macedonios' position on the Holy Spirit; and also perhaps against the Anomoeans, see F. Norris, "Gregory Nazianzen's Opponents in Oration 31," in R. Gregg, ed., *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments. Papers from the Ninth International Patristic Conference, Sept. 5-10, 1983*, (Philadelphia, 1985), 321-26.

⁴ *Or. 27.3*; Norris, ed., 218; Gallay, ed., 76.

⁵ See the helpful discussion in Norris, ed., 85. See the variants of the *titulus* of *Or. 27* in Gallay, ed., 70. All the main MSS indicate that the oration was composed *pros Eunomianous*.

⁶ First, ancient testimonies seem to support this claim, Jerome, in *De viris illustribus*, 117, refers to an otherwise unknown *adversus Eunomium liber* written

I would like to make a suggestion that differs slightly from this prevalent view of the orations as specifically directed at a rival religious group—the Eunomians. While the Eunomians and Anomoeans epitomized for orthodox Christians excessive dialectical questioning concerning the divine, they were not the only people who adopted the practice.⁷ We need to take into account a broader historical context in order to appreciate the orations as social documents.

According to Gregory, *Or. 27* was explicitly aimed at those people whose “cleverness is in words” (*πρὸς τοὺς ἐν λόγῳ κομφοὺς ὁ λόγος*).⁸ Gregory gave us a vivid characterization of these people as

by Gregory. To Gallay, 51-56, this suggests that *Or. 27-30* constitute the “lost” works against Eunomios. In addition, Rufinus identifies *Or. 27* as directed against *maxime Arrianos* in his translation into Latin of Gregory’s works. Jerome refers to an *adv. Eunomium lib.*, not to an *adv. Eunomianos lib.*, which should have been the proper way to characterize Gregory’s orations as in the later *tituli* of *Or. 27*. The *adv. Eunomium libri* of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa specifically target Eunomios and the positions which the latter held. This is not the case with Gregory’s orations which neither address Eunomius nor his associates. An accompanying argument about the applicability of Jerome’s testimony has been his citation of a *De spiritu sancto* by Gregory, which has been taken to refer to *Or. 31*. Yet on this analogy, we would expect Jerome to also mention a *De filio* and *De Patre Deo*, etc. Furthermore, while Jerome, who might actually have been present in Constantinople while Gregory was delivering his orations, could have been well-informed concerning the audience of the orations, Rufinus was unlikely to know anything about the orations beyond what they suggested to him internally. Rufinus concluded that the orations were directed at the *maxime Arrianos* because the theological positions recalled those generally held by Arians of his own day; see A. Engelbrecht, *Tyranni Rufini Orationum Gregorii Nazianzeni novem interpretatio*, in CSEL 46 (1910).

Furthermore, the positions refuted by Gregory in many places, esp. where he lists ten “objections” which he then proceeds to demolish, reflect arguments commonly identified with Eunomians and their methods of questioning. But it is not clear that they were positions held only by the “Eunomian community.” I think we ought to question whether it is proper to assume a strict correspondence between dogmatic position and community. Were all people who espoused positions which the “Eunomians” championed “Eunomians”?

⁷ See L. R. Wickham, “The *Syntagmation* of Aetius the Anomean,” *Journal of Theological Studies* new series 19 (1968), 532-69, and E. Vandenbussche, “La part de la dialectique dans la théologie d’Eunomius ‘le technologue,’ *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 40 (1944-45), 47-72.

⁸ *Or. 27.1*; Norris, ed., 218: “I shall address my words to those whose cleverness is in words. . . . There are people, believe me, who not only have ‘itching ears’: their tongues, also and now, I see, even their hands itch to attack my arguments. They delight in ‘profane and vain babblings and contradictions of the Knowledge falsely so-called,’ and in ‘strife of words’ which lead to no useful result.” MS R of Rufinus’ translation (*De arrianis* 9, 1, Engelbrecht, ed., 265) has the *titulus* as “De Arrianis

eloquent and hubristic.⁹ They put their energy into

setting and solving conundrums. They are like the promoters of wrestling-bouts ($\tauὰ παλαισμάτα$) in the theaters, and not even the sort of bouts which are conducted in accordance with the rules ($χατὰ νόμους$) of the sport and lead to the victory of one of the antagonists, but the sort which are stage-managed to give the uncritical spectators ($τῶν ἀμαθῶν$) visual sensations and compel their applause.¹⁰

These “questioners,” like those who popularized wrestling, by bringing it from its proper place in the palaestra into the theaters, did not respect the rules of the sport and the boundaries proper to the game. Gregory therefore suggested that questioning, like wrestling, was an activity which should be kept within its proper bounds and not made to spill out into the streets as reflected in the current situation:

Every square ($πᾶσαν ἀγοράν$) in the city has to buzz with their arguments ($τοῖς λόγοις$), every party must be made tedious by their boring nonsense. Even women in the drawing room, that sanctuary of innocence, are assailed, and the flower of modesty is despoiled by this rushing into controversy ($τῇ περὶ λόγον ταχύτητι$).¹¹

Dialectic questioning was thus a critical intellectual activity that was also, to some, disruptive of the solidarity of the social community. These “questioners” caught people’s attention and lured them into arguments by posing their “questions” ($ζήτημα$) with a view to their rhetorical effect by making them as outrageous and shocking as

quod non licet semper et publice de Deo contendere” while MS Y has “De his qui indecent de lege contendunt.” The latter reflects the later title of *Codex Theodosianus* 16, 4: De his qui super religione contendunt.

⁹ On Gregory’s attitude towards eloquence and speech, see J. M. Szymusiak, “Note sur l’amour des lettres au service de la foi chrétienne chez Grégoire de Nazianze,” in *Oikoumene* (1964), pp. 507-13, and P. T. Camelot, “Amour des lettres et désir de Dieu chez saint Grégoire de Nazianze: les logoi au service du Logos,” *Mélanges de Sciences Réliigieuses*. Suppl. Coppin Festschrift, 23 (1966), 23-30.

¹⁰ *Or. 27.2*, Norris, ed., 217; Gallay, ed., 72.

¹¹ *Or. 27.2*, Norris, ed., 217; Gallay, ed., 72, 74.

possible. This opened a Pandora's box of chaos and confusion in which the proper order was overturned. Even the sanctity of the female quarters was violated! Finally, Gregory, after lamenting this social trend, rhetorically asks his "opponents": "Why do you conjure up a crop of dialecticians (*διαλεκτῶν ἀνάδοσιν*) to attack us, like the Earth-born warriors in the old stories?"¹²

The raising of points which were ἀτοποι and παράδοξι was a well-known way of challenging others to an argument, as in the case of the pagan philosopher Alypius in Eunapius' *Vitae Sophistarum* (460). The people who did so in a Christian context need not have been specifically opposed to Gregory or to orthodox theological formulations. They were instead people who did not see it as inappropriate to discuss theology in a public manner using philosophical dialectic—a culturally-sanctioned methodology dealing with predicate and propositional logic—as their guide.¹³

Behind this polemic, seen from Gregory's point of view, we have to acknowledge a groundswell of interest in the knowledge about the divine.¹⁴ It was a phenomenon that Gregory acknowledged.¹⁵ To illustrate this phenomenon, I turn to two well-worn coins. The first comes from Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, where he describes the shift from a pagan to a Christian culture. Formerly,

a chosen society of philosophers, men of a liberal education and curious disposition, might silently meditate, and temperately discuss in the gardens of Athens or the library of Alexandria, the abtruse questions of metaphysical science. The lofty speculations, which neither convinced the understanding nor agitated the passions of the Platonists themselves, were carelessly overlooked by the idle, the busy, and even the studious part of mankind. But after the *Logos* has been revealed as the sacred

¹²Or. 27.9, Norris, ed., p. 223; Gallay, ed., 92.

¹³See R. M. Grant, "Paul, Galen and Origen," JTS n.s. 34 (1983), 533-36; J. de Ghellinck, "Quelques appréciations de la dialectique et d'Aristote durant les conflits trinitaires du IVe siècle," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 26 (1930), 5-46; and idem., "Quelques mentions de la dialectique stoïcienne dans les conflits doctrinaux du IVe siècle," *Abhandlungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I: Philosophia Perennis* (Regensberg/Ratisbonne, 1930), pp. 59-67.

¹⁴See H. J. Carpenter, "Popular Christianity and the Theologians in the Early Centuries," JTS n.s. 14 (1963), 294-310.

¹⁵Or. 32.

object of faith, the hope, and the religious worship of the Christians, the mysterious system was embraced by a numerous and increasing multitude in every province of the Roman world. Those persons who, from their age, or sex, or occupations, were the least qualified to judge, who were the least exercised in the habits of abstract reasoning, aspired to contemplate the economy of Divine Nature: and it is the boast of Tertullian [in *apologeticum liber 46*] that a Christian mechanic could readily answer such questions as had perplexed the wisest of the Grecian sages.¹⁶

The second passage is the famous quote from Gregory of Nyssa's *De deitate filii et spiritus sancti*, which underscores the pervasiveness of "curiosity and debate" throughout (χατά) Constantinople:

Πάντα γάρ χατά τὴν πόλιν τῶν τοιούτων πεπλήρωται, οἱ στενωποί, οἱ ἀγοραί, αἱ πλατεῖαι, τὰ ἄμφοδα· οἱ τῶν ἴματίων χάπτηλοι, οἱ ταῖς τραπέζαις ἐφεστηκότες, οἱ τὰ ἐδώδιμα ἡμῖν ἀπεμπολοῦντες. Ἐὰν περὶ τῶν δύοιλῶν ἐρωτήσῃς, ὁ δέ σοι περὶ γεννητοῦ καὶ ἀγενήτου ἐφιλόσοφης· καὶ περὶ τιμῆματος ἅρου πύθοι, Μείζων ὁ Πατήρ, ἀποχρίνεται, καὶ ὁ Γιὸς ὑποχείριος. Τὸ λουτρὸν ἐπιτήδειον ἔστιν, εἴποις, ὁ δὲ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων τὸν Γιὸν εἶναι διωρίσατο.¹⁷

Meddlesome curiosity was in the eye of the beholder. What was πολυπραγμοσύνη to one Christian was legitimate theological inquiry to others. But claims to knowledge about the divine also served a social function in certain Christian circles. Within a competitive environment that valued innovation and agonistic excellence, differential claims to knowledge provided one principal means for structuring a community of individualists.¹⁸

¹⁶E. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 21, 1, Modern Library edition (New York, n.d.), 1, p. 680.

¹⁷See Gregory of Nyssa's *Oratorio de deitate filii et spiritus sancti*, PG 46.557.

¹⁸See N. W. de Witt, "Organization and Procedure in Epicurean Groups," *Classical Philology* 31 (1936), 205-11, and J. Hahn, *Der Philosoph und der Gesellschaft. Selbstverständnis, öffentliches Auftreten und populäre Erwartungen in der hohen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart, 1989), 109.

I also want to further suggest that claims to knowledge, especially to knowledge about the divine nature, served the social function of allowing the Greek tradition of competitive excellence to survive within the increasingly christianized context of Greco-Roman cities. The activities of Aetios the Syrian in Antioch and Alexandria point to the importance of the ἀγών to certain Christians.¹⁹ However, we should note that this agonistic culture appeared at odds with other Christians who espoused very different ideas as to how Christian communities ought to be structured.

As a general methodological point, it seems to me that the *explanandum* in this complex situation is not so much why many people were discussing the nature of God in a free-wheeling fashion as why others were troubled by the phenomenon.

Gregory, like Edward Gibbon, found the effects of the “popularization” of the λόγος undesirable and deeply disturbing. So long as the process of popularization served to confound outsiders, i.e., pagans (see Tertullian’s reported remark in *Apologeticum liber 46*), it was more or less acceptable. Yet in the late fourth century, the process created many tensions within the Christian communities themselves and, in the view of Gregory and others, instead of strengthening the reputation of Christianity, embarrassed the faith before outsiders. Clearly what was needed was a means to check the development.

Gregory probably delivered the orations shortly after Emperor Theodosius I issued his *cunctos populos* on Feb. 27, 380, a law that would theoretically have given Gregory some authority to take actions against his perceived theological rivals. Though the Arians lost their churches by Theodosius’ order, the internal evidence of the orations suggests that Gregory was in a poor position to enforce his prescripts against the public philosophizing of the divine nature.²⁰ Gregory’s ability to persuade was his only means of influence. This, however, was not only because of the weak position of the orthodox community in the capital. The more pertinent reason why no concrete or physical action could be taken was that Gregory was not actually addressing a specific theological rival group that had a distinct institutional presence; instead, he was finding fault with an all-pervasive social practice. Edicts against specific “heresies” were of little or no use when it came to putting an end to the phenomenon

¹⁹See Philostorgios, *H. E.* 3, 15.

²⁰*Or. 33.*

of "curiosity and debate." The best that someone could do was to label the phenomenon "Eunomian," and hence heretical, whether or not all who posed questions saw themselves, or were labeled by others, as Eunomians.

But help was on its way, if not for Gregory at least for others faced with a similar situation. This help came in the form of an imperial edict.²¹

On June 16, 388, Theodosios I, promulgated one of the first imperial laws (addressed to Tatianus, *p.p. orientis*) against the teaching and discussion of theology in public (*ad publicum*). In the bombastic language of imperial edicts, the emperor gave the following warning:

There shall be no opportunity for any man to go out to the public and to argue about the religion or to discuss it or to give any counsel. If any person hereafter, with flagrant and damnable audacity, should suppose that he may contravene any law of the kind or if he should dare to persist in his action of ruinous obstinacy, he shall be restrained with a due penalty and proper punishment.²²

Whether such laws as this had any force in reality is extremely unclear. I personally doubt that they did. The effectiveness of a given law certainly would have depended on the measures adopted by local bishops. In any case, this law came too late to be of any use to Gregory, who had to resort to other means, primarily the means of persuasion, to combat the phenomenon of "curiosity and debate." What measures could Gregory take in order to convince people to put an end to the public discussion of theology? For the present, I wish to limit myself to an investigation of three themes: credentialism or the emphasis on qualification, catechesis, and mystification.

²¹Historia Ecclesiastica 8, 6.

²² Sozomen, English translation from *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions XVI*, 4.2; C. Pharr, ed. (Princeton, 1952), 449. Latin text in P. Krüger, T. Mommsen and P. M. Meyer, eds., *Theodosiani Libri XVI* (Berlin, 1905) I, 853-54; "Nulli egresso ad publicum vel disceptandi de religione vel tractandi vel consilii aliquid deferendi patescat occasio. Et si quis posthac ausu gravi ad que damnable contra huiusmodi legem veniendum esse crediderit vel insistere motu pestifera perseverationis audebit, competenti poena et digno supplicio coherceatur." A similar earlier law (*Cod. Theod.* XVI, 4.1 issued in January 386) is not as explicit in wording with regard to public debates *de religione*.

Credentialism

At issue was the conflicting definition of the Christian παιδεία that would entitle someone to philosophize about God. Even though Gregory realized that the people whom he addressed regarded themselves as possessing παιδεία, he repeatedly suggested that they were deluded. Gregory argued that the “posers of questions” did not in fact possess the credentials of a solid παιδεία. In fact, what they possessed was the clever ability to pose difficult questions with a cursory and superficial knowledge of theology and of philosophical dialectic. Here Gregory opposed those who acquire for themselves the ability to ask acute theological questions not through a systematic training in philosophy and meditation, but through handbooks and other short-cuts, without the kind of long and difficult apprenticeship of which Gregory would approve. He asks bitterly:

why do you then try to mold other men into holiness overnight, appoint them theologians (χειροτονεῖς θεολόγους), and as it were, breathe learning into them (έμπνεῖς τὴν παιδεύσιν), and thus produce ready-made any number of councils of ignorant intellectuals? Why do you try to entangle your weaker brethren in your spider’s webs, as if it were some brilliant feat?²³

Gregory wanted to use the “way of life” as a test for the worthiness of one who would philosophize about God. According to Gregory, the “posers of questions” cared only about words and not about actual deeds. Such an attitude was antithetical to and much less desirable than “true Christian deeds”: hospitality, fraternal affection, marital love, virginity, love of the poor, chanting of the Psalms, vigils, fastings, and prayer.

In effect, Gregory asserted the importance of having a Christian philosopher who was also a practicing ascetic. Purification of soul and body through meditation served, for Gregory, as the prerequisite for the contemplation of the divine. Thus spiritual askesis or exercise stood as a *conditio sine qua non* for someone who wishes to become a Christian philosopher. Since it is crucial to be at leisure, to know God: “Δεῖ γὰρ τῷ ὄντι σχολάσσαι, καὶ γνῶναι Θεόν.”²⁴

²³Or. 27.9, Norris, ed., 222-23; Gallay, ed., 92.

²⁴Or. 27.3, Gallay, ed., 76.

The philosophizing of the divine became *de facto* the domain of those who were in a position to enjoy gentlemanly retirement.²⁵

Catechesis

Gregory had to face the reality that he could not hope to triumph over his opponents by means of his orations alone, no matter how persuasive they might have been. The real test would come after the services, outside the church, where people would be confronted with the “small questions” in intimate settings and be tempted to enter into a debate about the divine nature. Since Gregory could not accompany his listeners everywhere, and he could not hope that they would heed his advice and merely hold on to the *pistis* and refuse to enter into controversy ὅταν γὰρ τὸ τοῦ λόγου δυνατὸν προβαλλώμεθα, τὸ πιστεύειν ἀφέντες, καὶ τὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἀξιόπιστον ταῖς ζητήσεσι λύσωμεν,²⁶ he prepared ready replies for these encounters. In *Or.* 29, Gregory furnishes his audience with the precise statements, including syllogisms, with which they could respond to certain current “questions”:

This then is what is to be said to cut short our opponent’s readiness to argue (πὴν περὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτῶν ἐτομότητα καὶ ταχύτητα) . . . to rebuke others is a matter of no difficulty whatever but a very easy thing, which any who likes can do.²⁷

Furthermore, Gregory tries to make it easier for his listeners to grasp his points:

You want brief explanations here to avoid being swept away by their plausible arguments, and we shall group these explanations in numbered sections (*εἰς ἀριθμούς*) to aid the memory (διὰ τὸ εὔμνημόνευτον).²⁸

Even though Gregory appeared somewhat confident that he could

²⁵ *Or.* 27.3. Leisure was a precious commodity. Gregory of Nyssa chided Eunomios for not being in the position to have enough leisure to produce his *Apologia Apologiae* until many years after Basil of Caesarea died. See his *Contra Eunomium* I, preface.

²⁶ *Or.* 29.21, Gallay, ed., p. 224.

²⁷ *Or.* 29.1, Norris, ed., p. 245; Gallay, ed., p. 176.

²⁸ *Or.* 30.1, Norris, ed., p. 262; Gallay, ed., p. 226.

fortify members of his community in this way against “subversion,” i.e., being tempted into a free-wheeling debate with other Christians, he still lamented the fact that the situation had to come to this. He had rather hoped that his catechetical instructions and syllogisms would not be necessary in the first place because true Christians should find no delight in theological controversy:

This is the answer we make perforce to these posers of puzzles (*τοῖς αἰνιγματισταῖς*). Perforce—because Christian people (*τοῖς πιστοῖς*: not just Christians, but the upholders of the *πίστις*) find long-winded controversy (*ἀδολεσχία καὶ λόγων ἀντίθεσις*) disagreeable and one Adversary enough for them But may he who ‘expounds hard questions and solves difficulties,’ who puts it into our minds to untie the twisted knots of their strained dogmas, may he, above all, change these men and make them believers instead of logicians, Christians instead of what they are currently called (*πιστοὺς ἀντὶ τεχνολόγων, καὶ Χριστιανοὺς ἀνθ’ ὅν νῦν ὀνομάζονται*).²⁹

Mystification

For Gregory, *πολυπραγμοσύνη* or “meddlesome curiosity” is a moral flaw that ran the danger (*κανδυνέει*) of rendering the divine *μυστήριον* a *τεχνύδριον* or a “little finicking profession”³⁰ or a “mere social accomplishment.”³¹ Despairing of the hope that such a flaw was curable and amenable to friendly persuasion (see *Or.* 27.5), he hedged the issue of divine mystery with taboos. Discussing the credentials of the theologian, he remarks that “for one who is not pure to lay hold of pure things is dangerous (*οὐδὲ ἀσφαγές*), just as it is for weak eyes to look at the sun’s brightness.”³² The question about the “nature of God” represented a divine mystery which is also fraught with dangers for those who dared to approach it. Merely failing to do justice to this topic would bring about divine punishment to the impudent questioners (see *Or.* 27.9).

In *Or.* 28, Gregory employs a language of ascent to the Mount

²⁹ *Or.* 29.21, Norris, ed., p. 260; Gallay, ed., pp. 222, 224.

³⁰ *Or.* 27.2, Mason, ed., p. 3, note 12.

³¹ *Or.* 27.2, Norris, ed., p. 217.

³² *Or.* 27.3, Norris, ed., p. 218; Gallay, ed., p. 76.

in Exodus to describe divine contemplation:

I eagerly ascent the Mount—or, to speak truer, ascend in eager hope matched with anxiety for my frailty—that I may enter the cloud and company with God (for such is God's bidding). Is there a Aaron? He shall come up with me. He shall stand hard by, should he be willing to wait, if need be, outside the cloud. Is any a Nadab, an Abihu, or an elder? He too shall ascend, but stand further off, his place matching his purity. Is any of the crowd, unfit as they are for so sublime contemplation? Utterly unhallowed?—let him not come near, for it is dangerous (*Εἰ δὲ τις τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἀναξίων ψόφους τοιούτου καὶ θεωρίας εἰ μὲν ἀναγνος πάντη μηδὲ προσίτω, οὐ γὰρ ἀσφαλές*).³³

The concern over the widespread popularity of theological discussions loomed large in Gregory's references to the divine mystery. In fact, in *Or. 28.4*, Gregory made it clear that he is, in some sense, increasing the odds against any possibility of knowing or speaking about God by going beyond the claims of philosophers about the divine. Pagan philosophers,³⁴ Gregory notes, thought that

to know God is hard, to describe him impossible, as a pagan philosopher taught—subtly suggesting, I think, by the word ‘difficult’ his own apprehension, yet avoiding our test of it by claiming that it was impossible to describe. No—to tell of God is not possible, so my argument runs, but to know him is even less possible.³⁵

It has sometimes been noted that the tradition of mystification was linked with the need for polemics against theological rivals.³⁶

³³*Or. 28.2*, Norris, ed., p. 224; Gallay, ed., p.102.

³⁴H. A. Wolfson, “The Knowability and Describability of God in Plato and Aristotle,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 56P257 (1947); pp. 233-49.

³⁵*Or. 28.4*, Norris, ed., p. 226.

³⁶See, for example, J. McLelland *God the Anonymous. A Study in Alexandrian Philosophical Theology*. Patristic Monograph Series 4 (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 149, on John Chrysostom's emphasis on the inability of human language to capture God's essence: “Apophatic theology is used here as a weapon against the Arian revival of Eunomios.”

I propose instead to look beyond the dogmatic rivalry by giving the social phenomenon of “curiosity and debate” the importance it deserves as a driving force behind the Christian mystical tradition. Once we are willing to take this step, the seemingly obtruse theological debate over the possibility for knowledge of God becomes a social debate which serves as a potent reminder, and a vivid illustration, of the gradual yet decisive Christian impact on the culture of competitive excellence of the Greek East.³⁷ Gregory was not immediately successful, but in the long run his view would gain the upper hand. In any case, the agonistic culture of Greek civic life had come, in the fourth century, under siege. With the victorious and threatening Goths roaming not very far away from Constantinople (as Gregory reminded his audience), a Christian’s duty was to forsake division in favor of social and theological unity.³⁸ Free-wheeling discussion of the nature of the divine, in this view, was motivated by a useless and nonconstructive πολυπραγμοσύνη or meddlesome curiosity.

The Athenian historian Thucydides uses the same word, ἡ πολυπραγμοσύνη in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, to epitomize what he regarded as the troubling adventurousness of the Athenian radical democracy following the leadership of Pericles.³⁹ Thucydides and Gregory shared the concern that their notion of social order was violated since so-called *hoi polloi* were doing as they pleased without the firm guidance of those suited to lead through their παιδεία. What was common to the situation of Thucydides and Gregory was not so much the nature of the activities to which their use of the word πολυπραγμοσύνη referred, but rather, their assumptions about social order of τάξις. Both Thucydides and Gregory favored an ideology of

³⁷See J. Huizinga’s brilliant essay on the culture of the *agôn*: “Play and Contest as Civilizing Functions,” in *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston, 1950), 46-75.

³⁸See *Or. 33.2*. On the correlation between church unity and barbarian invasions, see G. F. Chestnut, “Kairos and Cosmic Sympathy in the Church Historian Socrates Scholasticus,” *Church History* 44 (1975), 161-66.

³⁹See V. Ehrenberg, “Polypragmosune: A Study in Greek Politics,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 67 (1947), 46-67, and A. W. Adkins, “*Polypragmosune* and ‘Minding One’s Own Business’: A Study in Greek Social and Political Values,” *Classical Philology* 71 (1976), 301-27. Adkins correctly notes that the accusations of *polupragmosune* reflect a social debate over the definition of and control over *aretai*.

a stable social order over social competition; both shared a love of εὐταξία and a preference for ὁμόνια over discord.⁴⁰ Both feared the influence of persuasive speech and rhetoric on other people whom they thought too ill-equipped to judge.

Gregory's formulation of divine mystery was influential in the later tradition.⁴¹ The move towards an apophatic Christian theological tradition derived part of its impetus from the late antique philosophical tradition best exemplified by Neoplatonism. Yet we should not forget that many of the advocates of a heightened sense of divine mystery, such as Gregory and John Chrysostom,⁴² regarded themselves as communal leaders whose positions were threatened by certain people's attempts to create a *de facto* two-tiered Christian community—élite versus the masses—based on the claim to know.⁴³

In his *Letter* 91 to his successor Nektarios,⁴⁴ a polite letter of

⁴⁰See A. R. R. Sheppard, "Homonoia in the Greek Cities in the Roman Empire," *Ancient Society* 15-17 (1984-86), 229-52.

⁴¹See R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence II: The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek* (Bonn, 1986), 169. Maximos Confessor (580-682), the commentator of Pseudo-Dionysios, drew heavily from Gregory's work also. See Gallay, ed., pp. 345-46.

⁴²See John Chrysostom's sermons against the Anomoaeans in PG 48.701-812. The first five were delivered in Antioch: text in *Jean Chrysostome. Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu. Tome 1 (Homélies 1-5)* 2nd ed. (1st ed. 1951) J. Daniélou, A. M. Malingrey, R. F. Falcelière, eds., SC 28 bis (Paris, 1970); discussions in E. Amand de Mendieta, "L'incompréhensibilité de l'essence divine d'après Jean Chrysostome," in *SUMPOSITION. Studies on St. John Chrysostom* Analecta Vlatadon, 18 (Thessaloniki 1973), 23-25, 40; J. Daniélou, "L'incompréhensibilité de Dieu d'après S. Jean Chrysostome," *Revue de Sciences Religieuses* 37 (1950), 176-94; A. d'Alès, "De incomprehensibili," RSR 23 (1933), 307; and in an unpublished dissertation by M. A. Schatkin, *John Chrysostom as Apologist: with special reference to the De Incomprehensibili, Quod nemo laeditur, Ad eos qui scandalizati sunt, and Adversus opugnatores vitae monasticae* Th.D. Thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1982. The remaining seven were delivered in Constantinople (PG 48.747-812). See F. van Ommelaeghe, "Jean Chrysostome et le peuple de Constantinople," *Analecta Bollandiana* 99 (1981), 329-49.

⁴³See the insightful essay by J. Lebreton, "Le désaccord de la théologie savantes dans l'Église chrétienne du III^e siècle," RHE 19 (1923), 481-506. On the perceived threats of élitism and two-tiered Christian communities, see P. Brown, "Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment," JTS n.s. 19 (1968), 94-114.

⁴⁴See. M. M. Hauser-Meury, *Prosopographie zu den Schriften Gregors von Nazianz* (Bonn, 1960), s.v. Nectarios, 126-28. Gregory wrote on behalf of his friend Pankratios; on the network of patronage, see R. Van Dam, "Emperors, Bishops, and

commendation bearing little news, Gregory reflects with certain satisfaction on the calm life outside of the maelstrom of the Constantinopolitan scene:

Affairs with us go on as usual: we are quiet without strifes and disputes, valuing as we do the reward (which has no risk attaching to it) of silence, beyond everything.

The strategy of mystification, ironically enough as a form of *sermo humilis*, aimed to delegitimize what some considered to be the indiscriminate exercise of discursive reasoning. To assert that something is ἀληπτός is saying that it is also therefore apophasic and hence cannot form the basis of any certain claim of knowledge.⁴⁵

The implications are clear. By emphasizing the vastness of the separating gulf man from God, a gulf so large as to render human knowledge of the divine nature impossible, the commonality of human weakness became the social glue binding one Christian to another. In contrast to dialectical questioning that tended to split the community, pious liturgical worship constituted the proper human response to the divine. With this in mind, I eagerly await the following lecture by Professor Peter Jeffrey on the *paradoxon mysterion* in the Byzantine and Latin traditions.

Friends in Late Antique Cappadocia," JTS n.s. 37 (1986), 53-76.

⁴⁵See, for comparison, Gregory of Nyssa's statement in his *Contra Eunomium* 1 (Jaeger, ed., p. 367).



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Poverty, Social Involvement, and Life in Christ according to Saint Gregory the Theologian

VERNA E. F. HARRISON¹

IN *ORATION 19.12*, SAINT GREGORY EVOKE THE EVENTS SURROUNDING the Savior's birth and stresses that they are present realities:

Now the angels rejoice, now the shepherds are surrounded with radiance, now the star runs from the east toward the great and unapproachable Light. Now the Magi bow down and bear gifts and know the King of all and by the star perceive well what is heavenly.²

The homilist then invites his audience to share in worship with the angels, shepherds, and wise men. In his monumental *Corps mystique du Christ*, Émile Mersch explains that according to Gregory the saving events of Christ's incarnate life are made present in the Church's liturgical celebration of the major feasts, and that in this way the faithful come to participate in these events.³ This concept has also become a commonplace of contemporary Orthodox liturgical

¹ Let me express my appreciation to His Grace, Bishop Methodios and the faculty and staff of the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology for their hospitality during the Conference on St. Gregory the Theologian, April 21-24, 1991. I am indebted to His Grace, Bishop Demetrios Trakatellis, for suggestions that have improved this paper.

² PG 35.1057B-C.

³ Émile Mersch, *Le corps mystique du Christ: Études de théologie mystique*, 2nd ed. (2 vols., Paris, 1936), 1, pp. 439-47.

theology.⁴ To see the connection between Gregory's spirituality and current practice, one need only cite the first lines of his Christmas homily: "Christ is born; give glory. Christ is from heaven, receive him. Christ is on earth, be lifted up. Sing to the Lord, all the earth."⁵ These familiar words are quoted in the first irmos of the Canon for the Feast of the Nativity in the Byzantine rite.

The parallel text from *Or. 19* is interesting because, as several scholars have observed,⁶ it is probably not a Christmas sermon at all. The circumstance which Gregory perceives as making the Savior's birth a present reality available to his congregation is not a festive day in the liturgical calendar, but a troubling event in the political and economic life of the community of Nazianzos. An imperial official named Julian, who is actually a faithful Christian and an old friend of Gregory and is present in his audience on this occasion, has come to town to take a kind of census. His task is to reassess and reapportion the tax burden to be paid by the people of the area. Gregory has corresponded with him, asking that the assessments be made justly and that properties whose revenues support clergy, monastics and charitable work be exempted from taxation. Julian has agreed to grant this favor and asked in return that the bishop, famous for his rhetorical brilliance, provide him with an oration. Discourse 19 grants this request and at the same time consoles the people of Nazianzos in their understandable anxiety at the presence of the revenue official, while reminding them of their obligation to obey him.

Gregory's theological interpretation of this worldly event is based on the fact that the occurrence of Christ's birth in Bethlehem is also occasioned by a census, one ordered by the emperor Augustus for purposes of tax assessment. The Lord himself is obedient to the civil authorities and allows himself, incarnate as a newborn child, to be counted and assessed for taxation. Therefore, he has clearly assumed

⁴ See Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, N.Y., 1973), pp. 47-65.

⁵ *Or. 38.1*, Claudio Moreschini, ed. *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 38-41*, SC 358 (Paris, 1990), 104. On the presence of Christ's birth at its liturgical celebration, see also *Or. 39.14*, *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁶ See Jean Bernardi, *La prédication des pères cappadociens: Le prédicateur et son auditoire* (Montpellier, 1968), 131-39; and Bernard Coulie, *Les richesses dans l'œuvre de saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Étude littéraire et historique* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1985), 63-70. Both of these works provide excellent analyses of Gregory's social situation and context as reflected in his discourses. See also Paul Gallay, *La vie de saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (Lyons, 1943).

and sanctified this aspect of human experience, making it an occasion of encounter with God. Thus he has shared the condition of being counted and taxed with the people of Nazianzos, and as a result they share it with him and are actually counted together with him. Through the incarnation, tax assessment has become an opportunity for communion with God. More specifically, it makes present to the faithful who submit to it the whole complex of events in the Savior's life of which it forms a part, namely those surrounding his birth. Thus it becomes in some sense a functional parallel to the liturgical feast of the Nativity. The coming of Julian the assessor brings with it the coming of Christ, who is born among the people of Nazianzos. Gregory honors the official for enabling this spiritual event.

Although *Or. 19* is clearly an occasional piece, the theology it embodies is not at all accidental. In Ep. 101, Gregory states the basic principle of his soteriology with characteristic clarity: "What is not assumed is not healed, but what is united to God, that also is saved."⁷ Through the incarnation, Christ saves by uniting the whole of the human composite and all aspects of human experience with himself as God. By his divine presence, he purifies what is sinful and sanctifies what is good.⁸ Gregory understands this as occurring in a concrete and realistic way and emphasizes that the incarnate divine presence is joined to what is most humble and mundane in the human condition. A text from *Or. 37.1-2* illustrates this point:

Jesus . . . moves from place to place. Why? Not only that he may gain more of those who love God by his visitation; but also, as it seems to me, that he may hallow more places. . . . And perhaps he goes to sleep, in order that he may bless sleep also; perhaps he is tired that he may hallow weariness also;

⁷ Paul Gallay, ed., *Grégoire de Nazianze. Lettres théologiques*, SC 208 (Paris, 1974), 50. On Gregory's soteriology, see L. Stephan, *Die Soteriologie des Hl. Gregor von Nazianz* (Vienna, 1938); F. X. Portmann, *Die göttliche Paidagogia bei Gregor von Nazianz* (St. Ottilien, 1954); F. W. Norris, "Gregory of Nazianzus' Doctrine of Jesus Christ," (Dissertation, Yale University, 1970); T. Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze. Introduction à l'étude de sa doctrine spirituelle* (Rome, 1971); H. Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz* (Münster, 1972); D. F. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); and my "Some Aspects of Saint Gregory the Theologian's Soteriology," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 34 (1989), 11-18.

⁸ *Or. 30.6*, Paul Gallay, ed., *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 27-31*, SC 250 (Paris, 1979), p. 236.

perhaps he weeps that he may make tears blessed.⁹

The discussion of participation in Christ's Nativity in *Or.* 19 is another application of the same principle at work here. As he is counted in the census of Augustus, Jesus sanctifies the political and economic dimensions of human life by participating in one of their more mundane and disagreeable aspects, namely taxation. Moreover, for Gregory, this sanctification, which necessarily includes purification wherever sin is involved, is ultimately always understood as deification, since it consists in union with the divine.¹⁰

A great deal of fruitful research has been done in recent years on the social history of early Christianity and the Late Antique world. Bernard Coulie has done an exhaustive study of the economic aspects of Gregory's thought and life.¹¹ However, he and other scholars whose concern is secular social history leave aside precisely the theological and soteriological dimensions of economic life which were surely most important in Gregory's own mind. Because Christ has assumed all aspects of human experience, Gregory searches all aspects of this experience for means of encounter with him and thus participation in the divine. So in people's various political, social, and economic situations, he discerns opportunities for deification. The present paper will consider some of his reflections on these matters, particularly those involving poverty and charity toward the poor.

Let us first return, however, to the issue of political power, which we have already encountered in the person of Julian, an imperial tax official. In *Or.* 36, Gregory gives pastoral advice to various classes of people, beginning with the emperors themselves. To them he offers the following admonition:

Know with what you are entrusted and what the great mystery is concerning you. The whole world lies under your hand. . . . The things above are God's alone; the things below are yours also. Become gods to those under you ($\theta\epsilon\omega\gamma\tau\epsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon$ τοῖς ὑφ' ὑμᾶς), if I may indeed say a bold thing. "The heart

⁹ Claudio Moreschini, *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 27-31*, SC 318 (Paris, 1985), 270-72; C. G. Browne and J. E. Swallow, trans., *Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen*, NPNF, ser. 2, vol. 7 (1983), 338.

¹⁰ On the importance of deification in Gregory's theology, see Winslow, *Dynamics*.

¹¹ See, *Richesses*.

of kings is in the hand of God” [Prov. 21.1], as it is both written and believed. Let your power be there and not in gold and armies.¹²

In this text, the parallel between the heavenly world, which belongs to God alone, and the earthly world, which belongs also to the emperor, reveals the spiritual mystery embodied in his rule as well as his awesome responsibility. His political power is an image of the divine power and a participation in it. However, his deification is not automatic. He is exhorted to become God to his subjects by choosing to imitate the King of all in the use of his power. The emperor’s special relationship with God thus involves freedom and reciprocity. As Prov. 21.1 suggests, in virtue of his kingship he dwells in God in a particular and intimate way; he must also allow God to dwell in him and act through him by ruling as God would rule. This short passage contains much of Byzantine political theory in a nutshell.¹³ Though it is not stated here, imperial participation in divine activity is concerned particularly with the practice of justice and φιλανθρωπία.

As we shall see, the process by which the emperor can achieve deification follows the same pattern that Gregory envisages as occurring for persons in other walks of life. First, he finds himself in a situation where he *participates* in one of the divine attributes and activities, in this case power. This participation is a grace, God’s free gift of himself in and through the particular situation. The person must respond by choosing to accept and practice this participation in the divine through *imitation*, by using the attribute as God would use it, by acting as God would act and thus allowing God to act in and through his own action. This synergy of grace and human freedom, of participation and imitation, actualizes a *reciprocity* and mutual in-dwelling between God and the human, and this constitutes deification.

This process can occur in many circumstances, because the divine attributes and activities involved include all the aspects of the human condition assumed by Christ in the incarnation, as well as obvious properties of the divine nature, such as power. In this regard, the emperor is surely the exception rather than the rule. We will see that

¹²Or. 36.11; Moreschini, *Discours* 32-37, 264.

¹³See Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1968), 43-61.

for Gregory a much more common way to deification is poverty, which the Savior assumed in order to enrich human nature with his divine life.

However, the same spiritual path that is open to emperors can also be followed by other governmental leaders. This is clear from a text in *Or. 17*, where the Theologian addresses an exhortation to an imperial governor who may or may not be the same Julian whose visit is the subject of *Or. 19*.¹⁴ The official's power is understood as a sharing in Christ's kingship. "You co-rule with Christ," says Gregory, "with Christ you also co-administer." The governor is an image of God, and his authoritative acts image the divine activity. So he must honor this communion and revere his Archetype (Τίμησον τὴν συμφύσιν· αἰδέσθητι τὸ ἀρχέτυπον). He can do this by remembering the transitory character of this life and his position of power, by obeying God rather than the devil, and by remembering his creaturehood and the fact that his calling and his possessions come from the Creator, to whom he is indebted. He knows God and the divine will through Scripture, so he knows his duties, which are summarized as follows:

Imitate through these things God's love for humanity (φιλανθρωπίαν). For a human being, to possess this, namely well-doing, is especially divine (μάλιστα θεῖον). Let no labor to become god escape from you; do not let slip the opportunity for deification ("Εξεστί σοι θεὸν γενέσθαι μηδὲν πονήσαντι· μὴ πρόγ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς θεώσεως").¹⁵

This text makes explicit what is suggested in *Or. 36* and elsewhere and provides the theme for my paper.

Such opportunities are open not only to political leaders but to persons in all kinds of situations. In *Or. 14.2-4*, Gregory enumerates and praises a long list of virtues, offering as examples many virtuous Biblical figures but focusing on Christ himself as the prime example. The spiritual journey thus takes many forms, but in the Savior is its unity. The Theologian draws this conclusion in § 5:

Each of these virtues is a path to salvation and indeed leads

¹⁴See Bernardi, 121-24, and Coulie, 75-86.

¹⁵PG 35.976B-D.

to one of the eternal and blessed abodes. Since there are many modes of life, so also there are many abodes with God, which are divided and distributed according to the worthiness of each. Let one person be conformed to one virtue, one to another, one to many, one to all of them. Only let each journey in such a way as to press forward and follow in the footsteps of the good Guide, who makes the way straight and leads one through the narrow path and gate to the expanse of blessedness beyond.¹⁶

Gregory goes on to say that among all these virtues love for the poor, φιλοπτωχία, has a special place and brings one especially close to God. The φιλανθρωπία asked of political leaders and named as particularly divine in *Or. 17* is actually the same thing, namely compassion and active help for those who are weak and in need. This virtue mirrors God's activity closely because, as the Theologian remarks, in relation to the divine Benefactor everyone is poor.¹⁷ However, it is important to note that while charitable work thus has a central place for Gregory, it remains one virtue among others. In *Or. 14.2-5* he takes care to acknowledge that there are a multiplicity of vocations and ways of salvation. He does not simply equate Christian life with charitable or social justice work, though he values them very highly.

The topic of *Or. 14* is love for the poor, and in this sermon Gregory meditates on his theme with great theological and spiritual depth, providing an eloquent exhortation to practice charity.¹⁸ The rest of my paper will be devoted primarily to analyzing this text. It describes a process of deification through φιλοπτωχία that involves the same three components we observed in imperial union with God: participation, imitation, and co-inherence through reciprocity. Let us look at

¹⁶PG 35.864B.

¹⁷Or. 14.1, PG 35.857A-60A.

¹⁸On *Or. 14*, see Bernardi, 104-08; Coulie, 171-77; F. Trisoglio, "Reminiscenze e consonanze classiche nella XIV orazione di San Gregorio Nazianzeno," *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, II, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche, 99 (1964-65) 129-204; and D. F. Winslow, "Gregory of Nazianzus and Love for the Poor," *Anglican Theological Review*, 47 (1965), 348-59. There is an English translation of this homily in M. E. Toal, ed., *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, 4 vols. (London, 1960-63), 4, pp. 43-64. In this paper, I have sometimes quoted Toal with modifications, through the translations of other passages from *Or. 14* are my own.

each of these components in turn, recognizing that they are inextricably interwoven.

Participation. The Theologian views poverty and charity in a broad anthropological perspective.¹⁹ In *Or. 14.14*, he explains that as human beings, the needy and those in a position to help them are united with each other in three ways: as creatures of God sharing the same biological mode of existence; as being bearing the divine image and thus belonging to the spiritual as well as the material world; and as Christians sharing the same liturgical, sacramental, and moral life and together participating in the Savior's suffering, death and resurrection.²⁰ The unity of human nature is important in Gregory's anthropology and soteriology. He envisages this unity as having a strong "horizontal" dimension, in that all human persons somehow co-inhere in each other through sharing a single material life biologically and a single spiritual life as image of God. However, the divine image also involves a "vertical" dimension, which is at least as essential and is fully actualized in Christ's body. Ultimately, human beings participate in each other because they participate in God and in Christ.

In *Or. 14.8*, Gregory argues that charity toward the poor and sick, especially toward lepers, who in his society were homeless public outcasts as well as grievously ill, is an appropriate response to his listeners' unity with them in Christ's body:

We are all one in the Lord, whether rich or poor, slave or free, healthy or possessing a sick body, and one is the head of all, from whom are all things, namely Christ. And what the members are to each other, that each is to each, and all to all. We must never neglect or fail those who have fallen into this public infirmity [i.e., leprosy]; nor should we rejoice more that our own bodies are healthy, than we should grieve because our brothers suffer. Rather we should fix in our minds the thought that the health of our own bodies and souls depends on one thing, mercy (*φιλανθρωπίαν*) toward them.²¹

¹⁹On Gregory's anthropology, see Portmann; Althaus; Winslow, *Dynamics*; Jan Szymborska, *Éléments de théologie de l'homme selon Grégoire de Nazianze* (Rome, 1963); and Anna-Stina Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Gregory of Nazianzos* (Uppsala, 1981).

²⁰PG 35.876A-B. This sermon was preached in thoroughly Christianized Cappadocia, probably at Caesarea, to urge support for Saint Basil's charitable institutions.

²¹PG 35.868A-B.

The theological affirmation of the ontological unity of human nature thus ought to have practical social solidarity as a consequence. The healthy should care for the bodies of the sick as they care for their own bodies.

Gregory makes a similar point in § 37 of the same discourse, where he says, “You show reverence if you appear to Christ as a king and loving member” of the body toward other members who are in need.²² Human participation in the Savior applies to both the giver and the recipient of charity, and it enables their encounter with God and union with him in several ways. It allows the giver to imitate and thus participate in the generosity of the Creator and the compassionate service of the incarnate Lord while meeting and offering himself to Christ present in the needy person. It also enables the poor to be identified with the Savior through the sharing of his suffering and to receive God’s blessings in and through their human benefactors. Thus, in the act of charity, both giver and recipient participate in Christ themselves and also encounter him in each other. Their ontological participation in him and in each other as humans and Christians is the foundation upon which further imitation, participation and co-inherence can be built through the appropriate use of their freedom. As we study further texts, we will see how Gregory approaches these issues from various perspectives.

Imitation. Or. 14.24-27 argues that caring for the poor is an imitation of the Creator’s justice and generosity. In an exhortation paralleling the text from *Or. 17* quoted above, this passage reaches its climax by describing charity in terms of deification:

Become god to the unfortunate, imitating the mercy of God (γενοῦ τῷ ἀτυχοῦτι θεός, τὸν ἔλεον Θεοῦ μιμησάμενος). For the human person has nothing of God such as this, namely well-doing. And if the one does good more and the other less, each, I believe, acts according to his own capacity.²³

Notice that Gregory acknowledges the difference in scale between divine and human works of mercy, but he stresses their identity in character. He says that human well-doing belongs to God, which means

²²PG 35.908A.

²³Or. 14.26-27, PG 35.892C-93A.

that it is shared with its original owner, so to speak, through participation. This enables imitation and the union which constitutes deification.

In *Or. 40.31*, the Theologian exhorts the newly baptized to give to the needy in imitation of what Christ has given to them:

Does a poor man approach you? Remember how poor you once were, and how rich you were made. One in want of bread or of drink, perhaps another Lazaros, is cast at your gate; respect the mystical table to which you have approached, the bread of which you have partaken, the cup in which you have communicated, being consecrated by the sufferings of Christ. If a stranger falls at your feet, homeless and a foreigner, welcome through him the One who for your sake was a stranger, and that among his own, and who came to dwell in you through grace, and who drew you toward the dwelling place above. . . . A sick and wounded man lies before you; respect your own health and the wounds from which Christ delivered you. If you see one naked clothe him, honoring your own garment of incorruption, which is Christ, for as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.²⁴

This text goes on to say that you should forgive your fellow servant who is indebted to you as the Master has forgiven you ten thousand talents.

In an eloquent series of antitheses, this passage juxtaposes, compares and contrasts the immense spiritual benefits given by the Savior to the person baptized and the smaller material benefits that the recipient surely cannot but give to those in need. He who was poor and sick in soul has been made rich and healthy, so he is called to assist those in bodily need and illness. Notice that the spiritual benefits ultimately consist in Christ himself, who is given to the faithful in Baptism and the Eucharist. He is the wealth, food, drink, health, and garment of incorruption. In this list, the description of homelessness and hospitality is particularly significant. The Christian should welcome the stranger not only because Christ became a stranger for his sake, but also because the Savior came in this guise to him, identifying him with his own people and thus abolishing the estrangement

²⁴Moreschini, *Discours 38-41*, 268-70; Browne and Swallow, 371.

and foreignness separating God and humanity. Christ came to dwell in the newly baptized and in turn brought him into his own heavenly dwelling. The antithetical structure of this passage depicts a reciprocity between the Lord's generosity to the believer and the believer's generosity to the poor. The central concept is the relationship of mutual in-dwelling which unites Christ and his members. The work of charity echoes and extends this relationship into the human community.

For Gregory, almsgiving is not only an opportunity for deification but also a means of purification and healing for the sinful soul, something he says in *Or. 14.37* that everybody needs. He explains that this healing comes about through the imitation of Christ and the participation it brings with it. The Theologian exhorts his audience as follows: "Beg him to cure your wounds by his wounds. Acquire like by like, or rather, by small things heal great things." That is, because he is compassionate to you, show mercy to others who suffer.²⁵ Here again, the disproportion in scale between divine and human acts of mercy is emphasized, yet their likeness is also stressed. It is this likeness that brings together the Savior's wounds and the sinner's, and with this contact come participation in God along with healing, purification and deification. For Gregory, these various aspects of salvation are inseparable, and they are all wrought by the same divine presence incarnate in Christ.

For the Theologian, almsgiving is not the only way poverty is linked to the imitation of Christ. This goal is also attained by voluntarily becoming poor as an ascetic or simply by being poor. Gregory placed great value on the ascetical movement in which he took part and in which his friend Saint Basil played a leading role. In *Or. 14.18*, he represents asceticism and almsgiving as two alternative ways of handling wealth rightly:

We must either leave all things for Christ, that we may truly follow him, taking up the cross, and nimbly reach toward the world above, borne downward by no encumbrance, uplifted by humility and enriched by poverty, so we shall gain Christ in place of all things; or else we must share our possessions with Christ, so that our possession of them shall be sanctified by possessing them well and sharing them with those who

²⁵PG 35.908B.

possess nothing.²⁶

Thus, there are two ways of coming to Christ. One moves toward him either by turning away from material things or by finding him in and through material things. Notice that finding him through things is actually using things to find him in people, namely the poor with whom one's possessions are shared.

While the present paper is primarily concerned with the second of the paths named in this text, the first is central to Gregory's spirituality, as is evident in the whole body of his writings. In *Or. 14.21*, he completes the discussion of asceticism which begins with this passage by adding that it involves participation in the Savior's crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.²⁷ For the Theologian, there is an inner spiritual connection between asceticism and charity. Φιλοπτωχία can mean compassion for the needy, but it can also mean a love for poverty which leads one to renounce one's own possessions. In both cases, one is drawn toward the condition of poverty because Christ is present and manifest within it.

As for those who simply find themselves in poverty, the Theologian does not seem to ask much of them. His primary audience is a more affluent class of people, and he explains their Christian duties at length in many places, but he says almost nothing about the duties of the economically deprived. In *Or. 14.35*, citing several texts of Scripture, he asserts that God cares especially for the poor. To Gregory's compassionate eyes, perhaps they appear to bear so much already and share so fully in Christ's sufferings that it would hardly be appropriate to burden them with further obligations. Whether or not this is the case, the Theologian has read in Matthew 25.31-46 that the Lord has chosen to identify the poor with himself, to unite himself with them. This is clear from the eloquent plea for almsgiving with which he ends *Or. 14*:

O servants of Christ, brothers and fellow heirs, while there is an opportunity, let us visit Christ, let us heal Christ, let us feed Christ, let us clothe Christ, let us gather up Christ, let us honor Christ, . . . Let us offer him this through the needy, who today are cast on the ground, so that when we have

²⁶PG 35.880D-81A.

²⁷PG 35.884C-85B.

departed from here, they may receive us into the eternal dwellings, in Christ himself our Lord, to whom be glory unto the ages. Amen.²⁸

In return for care on earth, the poor are represented as welcoming their benefactors into heaven. This is a further actualization of the reciprocity which unites members of the body of Christ.

Reciprocity. We have already touched on this theme several times, but let us look at one further passage where it plays a central role. In *Or. 14.22*, Gregory represents charity as giving to God, who gives a rich life in heaven in return. The text moves from there to the idea of giving all of one's possessions and with them one's whole being to God:

Give a little to him, from whom you have received much. Give even all to him, who has given all to you. You will never overcome God's generosity, even if you give away all you have, even if you hand over your own being. For to be given to God, this is also to receive him. And however much you bring to him, more always remains. Nor will you give anything that is your own; for all things flow from God. And as nobody can outrun his own shadow, for wherever we walk, it will always follow us or go before us, and as the body cannot raise itself above the head, which always remains above the body, so neither can we overcome God in giving. For we do not give anything that is not his, nor do we surpass his liberality.²⁹

Here, almsgiving has been transformed and assimilated into worship. It has become a way of offering oneself to God which parallels, or perhaps becomes identical to, the consecration and self-offering of the ascetic. At this point, perhaps all the paths toward the eternal abodes coalesce into a single, all-encompassing act of adoration. Deeds of charity and all other works of virtue and imitations of Christ become ways of giving one's person to God. He gives much more, indeed gives himself in return. What Gregory describes here is actually the reciprocal self-giving among divine and human persons which constitutes the life of God's eternal kingdom. His point seems to be that

²⁸*Or. 14.40*, PG 35.909B-C.

²⁹PG 35.885C-88A.

in acts of charity the reciprocity which occurs among human beings and between them and Christ inaugurates this life of love and gives it the capacity to grow into its fullness. Although the Theologian does not use this language, such reciprocal giving can be seen as an icon of the life of the Holy Trinity and a participation in it.³⁰

Conclusion. Saint Gregory's understanding of human existence and of its political, social and economic dimensions is inextricably interwoven with his understanding of Christology and soteriology. In the most worldly aspects of human experience, he looks for manifestations of Christ and opportunities for deification. He finds them in just and merciful government service, in the hardships of poverty and even in the payment of taxes, but especially in the giving and receiving of charity in all its forms.

Contemporary scholarship has shown how much our insight into early Christian theology benefits from an understanding of the social history of the cultures in which it emerged. Perhaps the material studied in this paper indicates that the converse is also true, namely that the social dimensions of the early Christians' experience can be better understood in the context of their theology and spirituality.

The teachings of Saint Gregory outlined here may also be able to say something significant to today's churches. They could help Western Christians to see their concerns for social justice in a broader anthropological, Christological, soteriological and eschatological context. They could also help Eastern Christians to remember that works of charity have always formed an integral part of their Church's practice.³¹ and that human life cannot be divided into mutually exclusive sacred and secular or contemplative and active dimensions. Persons and communities have different vocations, but in the Church as a whole, all the parts co-inhere as members of one body characterized by wholeness and fullness of life.

³⁰Saint Gregory played an essential part in articulating the doctrine of the Trinity itself as it came to be formulated in the fourth century. In his time, not all of its anthropological implications were explicitly conceptualized.

³¹For more on this point, see my "Poverty in the Orthodox Tradition," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990) 15-47.



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**Reluctance in Religion:
Communicating the Spirituality of
Saint Gregory the Theologian to
Undergraduate Students**

JON NELSON BAILEY

TEACHING SURVEY COURSES ON THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY CAN be challenging. It is always hard to know what to include, what to omit, what to emphasize, and what to leave as seed for thought. The challenge is greatest when the information must be communicated to undergraduate students, since many of these students are not interested in anything that sounds like history. Most of them are unaware of and unconcerned about the events and individuals of antiquity. Yet these students are often planning to commit their lives to some aspect of Christian ministry, or they will become active members of churches around the world. Thus, the importance of helping them understand something of the Christian past is crucial.

Everyone who teaches such courses has his or her own philosophy of how it should be done. My own approach emphasizes the life experiences of significant individuals in the history of Christianity. I try to help the students learn more than just dates and names and places. One way to do this is to show how Christians in the past dealt with the same problems people face today. As students identify with those experiences, the past comes alive with meaning for the present.

How then do I communicate the spirituality of Saint Gregory the Theologian to undergraduate students? I focus on one aspect of his life which helps students identify with him and his relationship with God, and to better understand his contributions to Christianity. I refer

to this as "Reluctance in Religion."

The story of Saint Gregory the Theologian, is a story in which reluctance plays an important part. In almost every phase of his life we see evidence of hesitation or caution in religion. In connection with the major events of his life, and in his written theological works, Gregory shows a clear reticence about moving too far or too fast. In a sense, it is the pious humility that keeps a person from rushing in where angels fear to tread. But it is also something of the human element within all of us that resists change and challenge, especially in matters of religion. The life of Gregory provides us with an example of a person who struggled with such feelings of reluctance for his entire life; yet because of his true spirituality and understanding of God, he is remembered as the Theologian.

Gregory's story usually begins with details that are fairly familiar to students. Being raised in a Christian home at Arianzos in Cappadocia, Gregory studied first in his hometown. He continued his studies at Caesarea in Cappadocia, where he began his lifelong friendship with Basil. He then moved to Caesarea in Palestine where he studied with Thespesios and developed a love for Origen. At Alexandria in Egypt he learned more about Origen, perhaps studying with Didymos the Blind, and possibly meeting Athanasios the Bishop and Antony the Hermit. Finally his scholarly pursuits led him to Athens, where he was reunited with Basil, and where he studied under Himerios and Prohaeresios. Although Gregory's education was primarily in rhetoric, he was certainly exposed to the finest religious teaching of his day. And while living in Athens, Gregory joined with Basil in a plan to live the "philosophic life" together in a monastic retreat. Until late in his stay at Athens, however, or perhaps even until his return to Nazianzos, Gregory remained unbaptized. And when Basil left Athens to visit monasteries in Palestine and Egypt, and to begin his own monastic retreat in Pontos, Gregory stayed behind in Athens. In spite of his interest in religion, Gregory was still reluctant to move forward in his faith.

Finally, Gregory left Athens and returned to his homeland. But he hesitated to join Basil in Pontos. His concern for his elderly parents hindered him from leaving behind the active life and devoting himself to ascetic contemplation with Basil. In a letter written around A. D. 357, he explained his feelings to Basil:

I have failed, I confess, to keep my promise. I had engaged

even at Athens, at the time of our friendship and intimate connection there (for I can find no better word for it), to join you in a life of philosophy. But I failed to keep my promise, not of my own will, but because one law prevailed against another; I mean the law which bids us honor our parents overpowered the law of our friendship and intercourse. Yet I will not fail you altogether, if you will accept this offer. I shall be with you half the time, and half of it you will be with me, that we may have the whole in common, and that our friendship may be on equal terms; and so it will be arranged in such a way that my parents will not be grieved, and yet I shall gain you.¹

Eventually, Gregory did spend time with Basil at the retreat in Pontos. Their life there was the subject of Gregory's reminiscence in *Epistles* 2, 4, 5, and 6. At the same time, however, Gregory found himself being drawn into another aspect of religion that he was not ready to accept. Back at Nazianzos, his father, who was bishop, had decided that Gregory should be ordained as a presbyter. Although Gregory opposed this, he was ordained to the priesthood around Christmas in the year 361. Once again a strong sense of reluctance caused Gregory to flee from this responsibility.

To Gregory, the pressure exerted upon him was a "tyranny" that he could not immediately accept. When he finally returned to Nazianzus and assumed his duties as priest, Gregory delivered a sermon at Easter of 362, explaining his actions. Near the beginning of that sermon, Gregory said:

Let us forgive all offences for the Resurrection's sake: let us give one another pardon, I for the noble tyranny which I have suffered (for I can call it noble); and you who exercised it, if you had cause to blame my tardiness; for perhaps this tardiness may be more precious in God's sight than the haste of others (*Or. 1.1*).

Later, in the *Defence of His Flight to Pontos*, Gregory described

¹ *Epistle 1*. Quotations of the *Epistles* and *Orations* are from the translation by Charles G. Browne and James E. Swallow in the *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, 14 vols. (New York, 1887-1894; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, 1952-1965), 7, pp. 185-498.

his reluctant submission to the priesthood, saying; “I have been defeated, and own my defeat” (*Or.* 2.1). He went on to explain his hesitation in great detail, and in closing said: “Here am I, my pastors and fellow pastors, here am I, thou holy flock, worthy of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, here am I, my father, utterly fanquished, and subject according to the laws of Christ” (*Or.* 2.116). Similarly, in the autobiographical poem written near the end of his life, he wrote of his reluctance in these words:

Tyranny of this kind (I can call it by no other name and may the Holy Spirit pardon me for feeling thus) so distressed me that I suddenly shook myself free of everyone, friends, parents, fatherland, kin. Like an ox stricken by the gadfly I made for Pontos, anxious to have the most godly of my friends as medicine for my agitation. For there, hidden in that cloud, like one of the sages of old, practising union with God, was Basil, who is now with the angels. With him I soothed my agony of spirit.²

Even after he entered into the office of priest, Gregory remained reluctant to live the truly active life required by the ministry. He was much more interested in solitude, silence, and contemplation. In *Epistle 8*, written to Basil probably toward the end of 362, Gregory claims he had been “forced into the rank of the priesthood.” However, awareness that participation in the active life would benefit others motivated Gregory to devote himself to ministry. His sense of responsibility won out over his reluctance. Thus he continued his journey in the religious life with a desire to save his own soul and th souls of those around him.

The next major event in Gregory’s life was another occasion of reluctance on his part. In 370, Basil had tried to trick Gregory into coming to Caesarea to help him secure the office of bishop. When Gregory learned of the deception, he was very hurt and did not come. However, letters written by Gregory did help Basil obtain the office. Then, in 371, Basil sought to appoint Gregory as bishop of the tiny town of Sasima in order to extend his influence in the region. This

² *Concerning His Own Life* 345-56. Quotations are from the translation by D. M. Meehan, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: Three Poems*, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 75 (Washington, 1987).

time Gregory was not only reluctant to accept the position, but was actually offended that Basil would involve him in what he considered a petty dispute. Gregory's assessment of the situation is seen clearly in the following words:

Midway along the high road through Cappadocia, where the road divides into three, there's a stopping place. It's without water or vegetation, not quite civilized, a thoroughly deplorable and cramped little village. There's dust all around the place, the din of wagons, laments, groans, tax officials, implements of torture, and public stocks. The population consists of casuals and vagrants. Such was my church of Sasima. He who was surrounded by fifty chorepiscopi was so magnanimous as to make me incumbent here. The whole idea was to get the better of a violent intruder by founding a new see. And among his warrior friends apparently I held first place. O yes, I was an able fighter once, wounds that are blessed being no great disaster, for, added to the features I've already enumerated, that particular see couldn't be held without bloodshed. It was a no man's land between two rival bishops. A division of our native province, which set up two metropolises for the small towns, gave occasion for the outbreak of a fearful brawl. The pretext was souls; but in fact, of course, it was desire for control, control (I hesitate to say it) of taxes and contributions, which have the whole world in a miserable commotion (*Concerning His Own Life* 440-62).

As critical as this statement sounds, it does not reflect the pain and injury he felt as clearly the letters he wrote to Basil at the time of the conflict. The following quotations from these letters show how deeply Gregory was affected by the affair.

Do leave off speaking of me as an ill-educated and uncouth and unfriendly man, not even worthy to live, because I ventured to be conscious of the way in which I have been treated. You yourself would admit that I have not done wrong in any other respect, and my own conscience does not reproach me with having been unkind to you in either great or small matters; and I hope it never may. I only know that I saw that I had been deceived—too late indeed, but I saw it—and I throw

the blame on your throne, as having on a sudden lifted you above yourself; and I am weary of being blamed for faults of yours, and of having to make excuses for them to people who know both our former and our present relations . . . Give me before all things quiet. Why should I fight for sucking pigs and fowls, and those not my own, as though for souls and canons? Why should I deprive the Metropolis of the celebrated Sasima, or lay bare and unveil the secret of your mind, when I ought to join in concealing it? Do you then play the man and be strong and draw all parties to your own conclusion, as the rivers do the winter torrents, without regard for friendship or intimacy in good, or for the reputation which such a course will bring you. Give yourself up to the Spirit alone. I shall gain this only from your friendship, that I shall learn not to trust in friends, or to esteem anything more valuable than God (*Ep.* 48).

You accuse me of laziness and idleness, because I did not accept your Sasima, and because I have not bestirred myself like a bishop, and do not arm you against each other like a bone thrown into the midst of dogs. My greatest business always is to keep free from business. And to give you an idea of one of my good points, so much do I value freedom from business, that I think I might even be a standard to all men of this kind of magnanimity, and if only all men would imitate me the Churches would have no troubles; nor would the faith, which every one uses as a weapon in his private quarrels, be pulled in pieces (*Ep.* 49).

This time Gregory's reluctance won out and he refused the office of bishop at Sasima. Instead, he fled to a place of solitude. As he says: "Once more the goad struck me: I became a fugitive again, making for the mountain in search of my pet luxury, that beloved mode of life" (*Concerning His Own Life* 489-93). He later returned to help his father at Nazianzos. But even there he said: "I have been overpowered . . . So help me each of you who can, and stretch out a hand to me who am pressed down and torn asunder by regret and enthusiasm" (*Or.* 12.4).

Both of Gregory's parents died in 374, when there was a call for Gregory to be made bishop. Again he was reluctant. He fled to the convent of Saint Thecla in Seleucia where he stayed four years

(*Concerning His Own Life* 526-57). It was a time of study and contemplation. But by 379 he was called to Constantinople to help in the struggle of the small Nicene minority against the Arians.

When Gregory arrived at Constantinople, he found all the church buildings in the possession of the Arians. With determination he consecrated a house as a place of worship and called it Anastasis, the Church of the Resurrection. His years of training as a rhetorician and student of the scriptures soon brought results; the eloquence of his preaching and his defense of orthodoxy won a large audience. It was during this period that Gregory gave his most important discourses, especially *Orations* 27-31. These *Five Theological Orations* won him admiration as a defender of Nicene orthodoxy and were the basis for his later title, "the Theologian." When the orthodox emperor Theodosius became ruler of the East in 380, Gregory was installed in the Church of the Apostles, and all of the church buildings in the city were restored to the orthodox Nicene Christians.

The highest and lowest points of Gregory's career in Constantinople occurred in 381. In May of that year, Theodosios opened the Second Ecumenical Council and recognized Gregory as bishop of the capital and leader of the Council. However, opponents challenged his right to serve as the bishop of Constantinople since he had been appointed previously as bishop of Sasima and also had served as auxiliary to his father who was bishop at Nazianzos. Frustrated with the political maneuverings at the Council, Gregory resigned his position and returned to Nazianzos. Before his departure from the city, Gregory delivered a farewell address to his congregation and the bishops gathered for the council. In that discourse, Gregory declared once again his reluctance to have been made bishop in the first place, and his unwillingness to participate in any unnecessary strife. All he desired was to retire to a life of quiet contemplation. His intentions are clear in the following words from that farewell discourse: "Give me a respite for my long labors; give honor to my foreign service; elect another in my place" (*Or. 42.20*). But his inner feelings about what happened are even more pronounced in these remarks:

All the time, like a tethered horse, though worn out by troubles and sickness, I continued to plunge in my stable. I neighed pitifully, vexed by my bonds, and longed for pastures and freedom. When they raised the issue I mentioned, I joyfully seized upon the pretext and broke free from my bonds. Clearly

I could never convince power seekers of this, but it is the truth. The opportunity was there. I came forward and spoke as follows: "Gentlemen, God has brought you together so that you may determine something that He would wish. As for my own affairs, let them take second place; since, in the business of such an important assembly, it is really trivial what the outcome be, even though my elevation has been in vain. You should raise your minds to a higher consideration. Be reconciled, unite, however belatedly. How long must we go on being a laughingstock? People regard us as insensitive creatures devoid of any feeling except combat. Please join hands with a good will in a gesture of fellowship. Now I become Jonas the prophet. I am giving myself as victim for the safety of the ship, even though it will be a case of the innocent encountering the waves. Take me then on the issue of the lot and cast me forth, the hospitable whale will welcome me from the depths. From now on being to be of one mind, and then make your way towards everything in due order. Let this place be known as the place of spaciousness, and then I shall have played not an ignoble part. If you persist with me, I shall have this single criticism—that you are making a conflict over thrones. If you take the view that I suggest, nothing will be difficult. When I was enthroned it was without enthusiasm, and now I take my leave with a will (*Concerning His Own Life* 1819-51).

After returning to Nazianzos, Gregory was asked repeatedly to attend more synods. He consistently resisted. Although he often excused himself due to his poor health, it is obvious that he was not interested in further participation:

It is more serious to me than my illness, that no one will believe that I am ill, but that so long a journey is enjoined upon me, and I am pushed into the midst of troubles from which I rejoiced to have withdrawn, and almost thought that I ought to be grateful for this to my bodily affliction. For quiet and freedom from affairs is more precious than the splendor of a busy life (*Ep.* 130; cf. 123, 124).

Life in Nazianzos presented more unpleasant demands. The church had not appointed another bishop and after almost a year of wrangling

Gregory agreed to serve in that position until a permanent successor could be chosen. Soon, however, it became clear to Gregory that the church would not select a successor unless he forced them to do so. His concern is obvious in *Epistles* 152, 153, and 182. Once, after attempting to resign, he defended himself in the following words:

I retired from the Church at Nazianzos, not as either despising God, or looking down on the littleness of the flock (God forbid that a philosophic soul should be so disposed); but first because I am not bound by any such appointment: and secondly because I am broken down by my ill health, and do not think myself equal to such anxieties. And since you too have been heavy on me, in reproaching me with my resignation, and I myself could not endure the clamors against me, and since the times are hard, threatening us with an inroad of enemies to the injury of the commonwealth of the whole Church, I finally made up my mind to sufferr a defeat which is painful to my body, but perhaps not bad for my soul. I make over this miserable body to the Church for as long as it may be possible, thinking it better to suffer any distress to the flesh rather than to incur a spiritual injury myself or to inflict it upon others, who have thought the worst of us, judging from their own experience. Knowing this, do pray for me, and approve my resolution: and perhaps it is not out of place to say, mould yourself to piety (*Ep.* 139).

Eventually, Gregory could endure the situation no longer. In 384 he retired to the family estate at Arianzos where he could devote his last years to contemplation and to writing and producing collections of his *Orations* and *Epistles*. He died in 390. Giving up his worn out body in death was one of the things he seems to have done without any reluctance at all, for he was assured he would be reunited with friends and family in the glorious presence of God.

Before ending the story of Gregory and the theme of reluctance in religion in his life, it is important to note that this theme appears also in his theological writings. In fact, it is his caution or reticence in discussing matters divine that gives his work its characteristic touch. Although Gregory insisted that God had made his existence and character known to the world, he always emphasized that God's true nature was incomprehensible. For Gregory, even when defending the

faith against heretics, the work of theology was to be done with humility. As Frederick Norris points out, Gregory was a philosophical rhetorician who “contended that theology was more a discipline of probabilities, even poetic in nature,” and who refused to see theology as “a systematic syllogistic science.”³ Gregory set forth some of the finest theological statements on God ever made, but he did so with reverent caution, perhaps even with the same reluctance that characterized much of his life. This attitude can be seen in the following quotations:

Not to every one, my friends, does it belong to philosophize about God; not to every one; the subject is not so cheap and low; and I will add, not before every audience, nor at all times, nor on all points; but on certain occasions, and before certain persons, and within certain limits (*Or.* 27.3).

Philosophize about the world of worlds; about matter; about soul; about natures endowed with reason, good or bad; about resurrection, about judgment, about reward, or the sufferings of Christ. For in these subjects to hit the mark is not useless, and to miss it is not dangerous. But with God we shall have converse, in this life only in a small degree; but a little later, it may be, more perfectly, in the Same, our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory forever (*Or.* 27.9)

It is difficult to conceive God but to define Him in words is an impossibility . . . But in my opinion it is impossible to express Him, and yet more impossible to conceive Him. For that which may be conceived may perhaps be made clear by language, if not fairly well, at any rate imperfectly, to any one who is not quite deprived of his hearing, of slothful of understanding. But to comprehend the whole of so great a subject as this is quite impossible . . . (*Or.* 28.4).

The Divine Nature, then, is boundless and hard to understand, and all that we can comprehend of Him is His boundlessness . . . (*Or.* 45.3).

³ Frederick W. Norris, “Gregory of Nazianzus,” *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York, 1990), 399.

In such statements we perceive Gregory's reluctance to go too far or say too much in matters about God. Just as in so many other areas of his life he had been reluctant to take certain steps or accept certain responsibilities, so in his teachings about God, Gregory shows us the beauty of holy hesitation in matters divine.

There are many other topics in the life of Gregory that could be discussed in a survey course on Church history for undergraduate students. And in their readings outside of class I encourage the students to become acquainted with Gregory's views on such issues as the person of Christ, the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and the glorification of human beings in the eternal plan of God. But with the limitations of time and the abundance of other important individuals and events to cover, I chose to focus on this one aspect of his life. I think it is one with which young people can identify. They are often uncertain about their relationship to the church and how they can respond to the expectations placed upon them. They may even have strong doubts about God and many of the basic teachings of Christianity. Some of their feelings of reluctance in life may not even be clearly related to religion as it is usually understood. But they need to know that strong feelings of reluctance in religion and in life are acceptable to God. As human beings it is natural to resist change, even when it is for the better. "Ah, when to the heart of man was it ever less than a treason to go with the drift of things, to yield with grace to reason, and bow and accept the end of a love or a season."⁴ And perhaps, in the lives of young people today, as in the life of Saint Gregory the Theologian, reluctance in religion will be not a hindrance, but an integral part of spirituality.⁵

⁴ Robert Frost, "Reluctance," lines 19-24, in *A Boy's Will* (London, 1913); reprinted in *The Poetry of Robert Frost: The Collected Poems, Complete and Unabridged*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York, 1979), 29-30.

⁵ This study is dedicated to the late Dr. Lemoine G. Lewis, former Professor of Church History at Abilene Christian University, and also to Dr. Everett Ferguson, Professor of Church History at Abilene Christian University, the teachers who first caused me to love the church fathers.



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Rufinus of Aquileia and Gregory the Theologian

F. X. MURPHY

ON HIS RETURN FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME AND THE WEST IN 397, Rufinus of Aquileia brought with him a considerable library of Greek theological lore. Besides the works of Origen, he carried with him the ten books of the *Ecclesiastical History* (E.H.) of Eusebios of Caesarea, eight sermons of Basil of Cappadocia and nine of the theological works of Gregory the Theologian, including his famous *Apology for His Flight*.¹

Rufinus first refers to Gregory in his preface to nine of the Theologian's discourses, which he translated into Latin at the request of his friend and convert, Apronianus, for whom (with his wife, Avita) he had already translated eight sermons of Basil of Cappadocia. Acknowledging that the latter were of a moral nature, fit for the edification of religious-minded women, Rufinus admits that Gregory's contributions are more theological in substance. They consist of his renowned *Apology for his Flight and Return*, a treatise on the priesthood used by both John Chrysostom and Gregory the Great in their respective tributes to the sacred character of the sacerdotal office. The second work is a Christmas sermon (*De epiphaniis sive de Natali Domini*); the third celebrates the baptism of Christ (*De luminibus quod est de secundis epiphaniis*); the fourth deals with Pentecost and the Holy Spirit (*De Pentecoste et de Spiritu Sancto*); the fifth deals with Gregory's return to Constantinople after the machinations of the Arian philosopher bishop Maximos (*In semetip-*

¹ M. Simonetti, *Rufini Opera Omnia* CCL 20 (Turnholt, 1961); cf. F. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia* (Washington, 1945), pp. 115-18.

sum de agro regressum); the sixth, seventh and eighth are sermons dealing respectively with comforting his people in distress while opposing a local ruler (*Ad cives Nazianzenos*); with the reconciliation of his father, then bishop of Nanzianzos, and his monks (*De reconciliatione monachorum*); and with the spoiling of the crops by a hail storm (*De grandinibus vastatione*). The ninth sermon is a refutation of the Arians.²

In the preface to this translation, Rufinus describes Gregory as “a man in all things incomparable who by the clarity of his preaching and writings bestowed on the church the splendid light of a knowledge of God, while practicing what he preached. . . .” He then supplies a thumbnail sketch of Gregory’s career:

He originated in Cappadocia where he had his home, with his father, a bishop, and his mother a saintly religious person. Educated and matured as few others in Athens, he practiced chastity, not ceding, indeed, to the temptations of his age or the enticements of his scholar companions. . . . Then although he excelled in philosophical studies, in Athens, and was being pressed to teach rhetoric, he secretly boarded a ship and departed. During the uncertainties of a tempest at sea, he vowed himself to the service of God.

Embarked on this determination, he was suddenly inducted into the priesthood by his father, the bishop of Nanzianzos. Unhappy with this situation, he disappeared for a time. Upon his return, a short while later, he delivered a sermon by way of an *Apologia* explaining the reason for his flight and return. On the death of his father, Gregory served the bishopric of Nanzianzos for a short while; but was then persuaded, on the return of the churches to the Orthodox Catholics after the death of the Arian Valens, to govern and instruct the church of Constantinople. There he performed wondrous deeds in preaching the Word of God, and converting almost daily an infinite multitude of heretics to the true faith. As usual, this renown generated envy. When then, perfected in the fear of God, he perceived that he was the source of dissension among the bishops, he departed of his own free will, only remarking

²A. Englebrecht, *Tyrani Rufinin orationum Gregorii Nazianzani novem interpretatio* CSEL 46 (Vienna, 1910); Murphy, pp. 117-18.

with Jonah, "If the tempest is because of me, take me and throw me in the sea, and this commotion among us will cease. . . ."

Of this man's life nothing was more pleasing or more holy, than his eloquence, nothing clearer or more illustrious, than his faith, nothing purer or more orthodox. . . . Not even the dissidents, while as usual disputing among themselves, could challenge his accomplishments so that whoever had the nerve to challenge his teaching, by that very fact proved himself to be a greater heretic . . . Read this man then without scruple, realizing however that the requirements of translation obscure no little the resplendent glory of the Greek. As to whether this is due to the poverty of our style, or the very nature of a translation, you who have knowledge of both languages will be able the better to judge.³

In his continuation of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebios, Rufinus informs us that he has condensed the historical events of the tenth book into the Eusebian ninth book, then added two books of his own composition (H. E. 1 and 2), making the tenth and eleventh, which deal with matters unrecorded from the age of Constantine to that of Theodosios.⁴ He maintains that he took his information from the traditions of the Ancients and from his own experiences. In the course of his controversy with Jerome, he explains that he has proven the authenticity of his faith by his suffering in the persecution of the Orthodox Catholics in Alexandria, after the death of Athanasios in May 363. He says explicitly:

Quod praesens vidi, loquor; et eorum gesta refero quorum in passionibus socius promerui . . . (I speak of what I have seen as present; and I report the actions of those whose sufferings as a companion I was privileged to share).⁵

³ Rufinus, *Praefatio in Gregorii Nazianzeni orationes* CCL 20, 255-56.

⁴ T. Mommsen, ed., *The Ecclesiastical History of Rufinus 1 and 2, Eusebios Werke 2*, GCS II, 2 (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 980-1040.

⁵ Rufinus, H. E. 2, 4 (Mommsen), pp. 1064-05. The accuracy of Rufinus, though questioned by modern historians, has been vindicated by R. Thelamon, *Païens et chrétiennes au IV siècle: l' Histoire ecclésiastique de Rufin d' Aquilée* (Paris, 1981) who judges his methods and intention in keeping with the culture of his age.

Jerome questions the truth of this assertion which Rufinus repeated in his *Apologia to Pope Anastasios*.⁶ At the same time, in his attempt to belittle Rufinus, Jerome gives him a backhanded compliment in referring to Rufinus' translation of Gregory's orations:

Why have you dared to write at all, and to translate this most eloquent man with an equivalent splendor of style? Whence have you this large vocabulary? This variety in your translation? This clarity in your sentences, a man who scarcely tasted of oratory with the tips of your lips in your youth?⁷

In his two chapters of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Rufinus supplies further details of the life of Gregory in conjunction with that of Basil, presenting the two as luminaries whose faith and courage disconcerted the civil rulers—who favored the heretical Arians—by witnessing intrepidly to the authenticity of the true religion. Rufinus hails Basil and Gregory as together representing the two ways one can achieve the perfect life: the exclusively contemplative method that he attributes to Gregory, and the model of preaching and charitable activity of which Basil is the example.⁸ In order to carry out this schema, Rufinus manipulates the facts. He thus misrepresents the process of their conversion to a monastic way of life. According to Rufinus, after their return from Athens, Basil taught rhetoric, while Gregory immediately turned to the service of God. Whereupon, says Rufinus, “Gregory, counting on his friendship, took Basil by the hand and led him from his professor’s chair into a monastery.”⁹

Actually, it was Basil who voluntarily retired to his family estate in Annisa, on the Iris river in Pontos, to engage in an ascetical life, frequently calling on Gregory to join him. Of their experiences, Rufinus narrates:

During thirteen years, having laid aside the works of the profane Greek authors, they consecrated themselves exclusively to the sacred Scriptures, seeking to understand them not by

⁶ Jerome, *Apologia* 2, 3 PL 23.426; 3, 26 PL 26.476; Rufinus, *Apologia ad Anastasium* CCL 20, 25-26.

⁷ Jerome, *Apol.* 1 30; PL 23.423.

⁸ Rufinus, H. E. 2, 9; cf. Thelamon, pp. 441-42.

⁹ Rufinus, H. E. 9; cf. Thelamon, p. 441, note 98.

their own preconceived ideas, but following the writings and authorities of the ancients. It was evident that they achieved the rule of interpretation of the Apostolic Tradition. Discussing primarily the commentaries on the prophets, they sought out the treasure of the wisdom and knowledge hidden in the vases of clay.¹⁰

In his Latin translation of the Eusebian *Ecclesiastical History*, Rufinus had both a polemic and an edifying intent. He desired to demonstrate the power of God in the life of Christians through the signs and wonders performed by the early martyrs, as well as by the confessors of the faith in the persecutions of his own times. He sees identical evidence of God's power in the steadfast faith of orthodox bishops such as Athanasios of Alexandria, in the *bête noire* of Julian the Apostate, and in the two Cappadocians, Gregory and Basil.¹¹

Depicting Julian as an evil prince (*profanus princeps*) addicted to the *insania* or insane practices of the pagan religion, he credits the emperor with supreme subtlety and astuteness (*calliditas et subtilitas*):

Julian was a persecutor, more astute than all the others not using violence or torture, but by honors, rewards, blandishment and persuasion, almost gaining over the greater part of the Christian populace more surely than if he had attacked them cruelly.

By refusing to allow Christians to study the pagan authors, he decreed that the literary competitions be open only to those who venerated the gods . . . He ordered that positions in the provinces and judgeships were not to be awarded to Christians who by their own laws were forbidden the employment of the sword.¹²

Gregory, in his two *Invectives Against Julian*, gives ample support to this contention.

Julian, he wrote, "thought that by resorting to stealth and

¹⁰H. E. 2, 9; Mommsen, p. 1014.

¹¹Ibid. d1016: *Sic in utroque diversa gratia unum opus perfectionem explebat*; cf. Thelamon, pp. 442-43.

¹²H. E. 1, 33; Mommsen, pp. 994-45; Thelamon, pp. 282-84.

deception, using force by way of persuasion, and hiding his tyranny under the cover of kindness, he could employ a strategy bound to succeed. He did not hesitate to adopt an artificial attitude and duplicity in his persecution against us.”¹³

In the account of the Julian persecutions, there is a close similarity between Rufinus and Gregory’s two *Invectives*, though without a direct dependence. At the same time, in their theological explanation of the Christian reaction to the persecutions, Rufinus and Gregory are of one mind. This could be, in part, at least, due to the influence of Evagrios Pontikos, who spent three years in Constantinople as a disciple of Gregory and, some time later, spent a similar period in the Monastery of Rufinus on the Mount of Olives.¹⁴

In the *Scriptorium* conducted by Rufinus in Jerusalem, there were undoubtedly most of the works of Gregory, although in Rufinus’ own writings there is no certain evidence of such a treasure. While our evidence in the works of Rufinus shows no immediate knowledge of other works of Gregory, there is a theological and historical affinity between the two men that helps solidify our knowledge of the church in the fourth century of the Christian era.

¹³Gregory, *Orationes* 4, 5; PG 35; Thelamon, 289.

¹⁴F. Murphy, “Evagrios Pontikos and Origen,” in *The Patristic Heritage* (Tappan, New York, 1990), pp. 95-96.



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Saint Gregory the Theologian's Use of the Abraham and Sarah Tradition in Relation to Marriage

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GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN WAS ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN an era of increasing controversy over the relative merit of marriage and virginity. Manichean influences on the Church were strong during the last quarter of the fourth century; rejection of the Old Testament and its married prophets was a major basis of Manichean anti-marriage disputation which questioned, among other issues, the salvific status of marriage and of married clergy. Gregory's ideas, particularly his use of the Abraham and Sarah tradition, provide a coherent and strong pro-marriage argument when placed in their theological and historical context. They also reveal his commitment to the use of the Old Testament in understanding the New, a related theological issue of the period.

In employing the ancient Sarah and Abraham motif to eulogize his parents and sister, Gregory provides a theological defense of marriage. That he considered marriage to be as honorable as virginity is evident in his writing. His depiction of the Christian wife and mother as spiritual guide and teacher fully equal to her husband offers a model for Christian marriage. And it indicates an appreciation of the Holy Spirit's feminine aspects, since the Holy Spirit's function is teaching about God.

But Gregory goes further than that. He illustrates that marriage is part of the apostolic process and has a soteriological function. Married women, not virgins, bring their husbands and children into the Church. Marriage creates a concrete social structure for the conversion of males to Christianity.

Gregory's use of the Abraham and Sarah motif will be analyzed in this paper. The correlation made of his mother, Nonna, and his sister, Gorgonia, with the Sarah tradition and with the Old Testament wisdom figure (personified in Proverbs 31) will also be explored.

What I am putting forward, I believe, fairly represents Gregory's views on marriage as they are expressed in his work. Gregory's orations, panegyrics, letters, autobiographical writing and poetry all offer evidence of the subject and the tradition.

The topic is of importance today because, while circumstances may have changed, marriage and family issues are still of concern to lay people and theologians alike. Gregory offers a perspective on two controversial issues today—that of marriage to non-Christians, and the tradition of married bishops. Since Gregory was himself the son of a married bishop who was converted by his wife, Gregory's perspective is not only abstract and theoretical, but based on his own experience.¹ This alone would make a study of Saint Gregory's work relevant.

David Hunter has theorized that a major basis of Manichean thought was the denigration of the Old Testament and its saints and of married Christians.² In the course of my exposition, I will support my contention that Gregory's writing reflects strong anti-Manichean sentiment by noting the kind of argumentation used to counter Manichean theological ideas that all sexual relations were tainted by sin.

Background

Recent scholarship has shown that there was considerable ecclesiastical interest at this time in the topics of marriage and married clergy, especially in Rome, where the Manichees were notably active. Writing against them, Jovinian and Ambrosiaster used the Old Testament and its married saints as ammunition in their pro-marriage arguments.³ The connection between the two issues is also

¹ For more information on Gregory's family and background see Jean Bernardi, "Nouvelles Perspectives sur la Famille de Grégoire de Nazianze," VC 38 (1984), pp. 352-59.

² David G. Hunter, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late Fourth Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987) 49. Hunter posits four other theological ideas that reflect Manichean thinking: a docetic Christology; the exaltation of virginity and fasting; a belief in the devil's authority in the created world; and the denial of the salvific value of baptism for all.

³ David G. Hunter, "On the Sin of Adam and Eve: A Little Known Defense of

made by Pope Siriacus of Rome, who wrote a Spanish bishop in 384 “that certain bishops and priests who oppose the imposition of celibacy cite the example of the Old Testament priests who remained married and bore children.”⁴

But the controversy was not confined to the West. In Homily 4 on Ozias, Saint John Chrysostom addresses the issue and gives an affirmative answer to the hypothetical question, “Did the prophet have a wife?” adding that he (Isaiah) also had children and that marriage was not an obstacle to the Spirit. The prophets Moses and Abraham were also married, and Abraham became the father of many nations and the Church and had Isaac as his son, Chrysostom elaborates.⁵ This indicates plainly that the marriage of the Old Testament prophets was also an issue in Antioch. In Constantinople, the Emperor Theodosios was also interested in discouraging the extreme asceticism of the Manichees, and the Theodosian Code contains a number of anti-Manichean laws promulgated in the 380s.⁶

In writing about antiascetic sentiment, however, one must be careful not to go too far. Virtually no writer of the fourth century, was completely against the ascetic ideal. Assertions of the salvific superiority of the virginal ideal were formulaic in most Christian writers. Even pagans like Libanius⁷ and the historian Ammianus Marcellinus⁸ glorified the asceticism of the Emperor Julian. And Julian himself praised the asceticism of the Empress Eusebia.⁹ The physician Oribasios’ medical collection, composed and written at Julian’s request, also reveals the pro-chastity views of the medical establishment.¹⁰

Marriage and Childbearing by Ambrosiaster,” HTR 2, 82.3 (1989) 298.

⁴Hunter, “Resistance to Virginal Ideal,” 63.

⁵Saint John Chrysostom, Hom. 4, J. P. Migne, ed., PG 56.125; Jean Chrysostome, *Homilies sur Ozias*, Jean Dumortier, ed. and trans. (Paris, 1981), pp. 148-49.

⁶P. C. Pharr, ed. and trans., *Theodosian Code* (Princeton, 1952) Code sections 16.5.7 (381), 9 (382), 18 (389).

⁷R. Foerster, ed., *Libanius Opera*, 2 (Leipzig, 1903-27), p. 45.

⁸Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire, A.D. 354-78* (Middlesex, Eng., 1986), Book 25, 4.1-14, 295-96.

⁹W. C. Wright, ed. and trans., *The Works of the Emperor Julian, I, Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, 1980), 301-05.

¹⁰Oribasios, *Collection Medicale*, in U. Bussenaker and C. Daremberg, ed. and French trans., 6 vols. (Paris, 1851), Vol. 6 by A. Molinier. *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, 6.1, 1-2; 2, 1-2, ed. and trans. Basil Blackwell, 1988.

In addition to the anti-Manichean laws of the Theodosian Code, new marriage and family legislation was enacted during this period. Previous legislation had been extremely severe on the wife accused of adulterous relations within marriage, whereas adultery by the husband was not cause for divorce. Theodosian legislation modified the existing laws; while women were still at a disadvantage, the laws were more equitable.¹¹

That Gregory directly influenced marriage legislation cannot be proved, but the Emperor Theodosios was present in 380 when Gregory passionately attacked existing pagan legislation in his *Or. 37*, "On the Words of the Gospel," claiming the legislation was written by men and biased against women.¹² He protested the prevailing "patria potestas" aspect of pagan law which he said gave the father sole authority over his children and left the wife uncared for.¹³ In an unusual analysis he made a case for equal treatment of male and female based on the fact that there was one maker of man and woman, one image, one law, one death and one resurrection, and that one debt is owed by children to both their parents. Gregory also attacked the position that women's inferior status is a result of Eve's sin, maintaining that both woman and Adam were deceived and that Christ saved both man and women by his passion and death.¹⁴

Supporting an equalitarian understanding of marriage makes sense. Strengthening the woman's legal position could work to the Church's advantage by providing a protection to Christian women who then have more latitude to advance the faith. Reducing the tyranny of the husband over the wife empowers her to lead him and others into the Church.

In *Or. 40*, "On Holy Baptism," Gregory also emphatically

¹¹ *Theodosian Code* 3, 16.1 (331). A woman could petition for divorce only if she could prove her husband were a homicide, a sorcerer or violator of tombs. The husband had to prove that his wife was an adulteress, sorceress or a procurer. If she could not prove such crimes, she would forfeit both her dowry and gift and such was liable to exile by relegation. If the husband could not prove his charge he would have to restore her dowry to his wife.

¹² *Or. 37*, PG 36.289-91; NPNF, Second Series, vol. 7 (1979) 339-40. See also Verona E. F. Harrison, "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology," JTS, Oct 1990, 461-62.

¹³ For more background on this see Marcella Forlin Patrucco, "Aspetti di vita familiare nel IV secolo negli scritti dei padri cappadoci," *Eтика sessuale e matrimonio nel cristianesimo delle origini*, ed. R. Cantalamessa (Milan, 1976), pp. 158-79.

¹⁴ *Or. 37*, PG 36.290; NPNF 7, pp. 339-40.

supported the notion that there was nothing second-rate about marriage, declaring that baptism is equally efficacious for all—virgins and married people. He cited the classic proof text of the early church, John 2.1-11, indicating Christ's (and Gregory's) approval of marriage by his presence at the wedding at Cana. Gregory explained that sexual chastity in marriage need be observed only during set periods designated for prayer and only by mutual consent and approval of the married couple.¹⁵ Gregory's positive view on women were expressed more specifically in the examples of his mother and sister and his use of the Abraham and Sarah tradition.

The Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople

How the Old Testament and the prophets should be understood was also a key issue in formulating the dogmas on the divinity of the Holy Spirit in 381. Since the records of the council are lost to us, little is known about what actually occurred at the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in which Gregory was dramatically involved; his comments on the topics under discussion are also unknown. However, the concluding phrase of the paragraph added to the creed—that it is through the prophets that the Holy Spirit speaks (*lalysen ton propheton*) certainly suggests that the status of the Old Testament prophets was an issue. We also have Gregory's *Fifth Theological Oration*, "On the Holy Spirit," written shortly before the council. In it he argued that one must look for the inner meaning of scripture to gain a correct understanding of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ He used Old and New Testament titles and proof texts in making the case, and he also spelled out his theory of the relationship of the testaments.

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son, and suggested the deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit itself dwells among us and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of itself.¹⁷

By looking at Gregory of Nyssa's writing on the same subject during the same period, it can be seen that both Gregories understood the

¹⁵Or. 40, PG 36.38 1; NPNF 7, p. 365.

¹⁶Or. 31, PG 36.156; NPNF 7, p. 324.

¹⁷PG 35.156; NPNF 7, pp. 325-27.

relationship between the testaments in similar ways. Gregory of Nyssa's oration to the Second Ecumenical Council, at which he ultimately presided, is lost. But his address two years later at the Synod of Constantinople in 383, "On the Divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit," focused on the relationship between the Old and New Testaments and included an extensive narrative on Abraham and Sarah.¹⁸ He claimed that it served as a guide in understanding the relationship of the Father and the Son. This theological usage of the tradition suggests that the section on Abraham and Sarah was not simply a random encomium placed in the oration to praise Abraham, as the section has sometimes been billed.

The Abraham and Sarah Motif

The importance of this classic marriage theme, one of the most enduring in the development of the Old Testament Canon in the Early Church salvation history, has not been fully appreciated in modern times, but had great theological significance from earliest Old Testament times, and was reinterpreted differently throughout the centuries.¹⁹ The development of the Genesis motif is too complex to review fully here. Briefly, however, previous Jewish and Christian usage included material on God's promise to Abraham that his progeny would fill the world if he would be faithful, and also on Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. The story had aspects of a new creation account, featuring Abraham and Sarah as the new parents of God's people. The woman's role increasingly became a major focus of theological interest, featuring the barren Sarah and other Old Testament women identified as barren, who, by their faithfulness to God and by His will, overcame this obstacle and bore children. The list included Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Hezeleponi (Samson's mother), and Anna.

The motif developed into an understanding of Zion, as the barren woman, and the Church, too, was so depicted. Paul in Galatians 4.21ff uses an allegorized²⁰ version wherein the women stand for the two covenants—the Old and the New. Sarah is the mother of the free

¹⁸Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit," PG 46.565A-73A.

¹⁹Mary Callaway, *Sing O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash* (Atlanta, 1986).

²⁰Although Paul calls it an allegory, it is really typology.

and of the Jerusalem from above, the Church. Hagar and her children are in slavery and represent Jerusalem in its present state.

Philo also worked over the motif extensively. He offered a totally unrelated allegorical account featuring Sarah as representing wisdom and virtue and the ways of achieving them.²¹ Philo's version connected Sarah with the wise wife of Proverbs 31. Clement of Alexandria, too, while making modifications, used this approach. Sarah is *philosophia*, wisdom, the way to virtue, and instrumental in the fulfillment of God's promise that Abraham's progeny would fill the world.²²

Gregory the Theologian follows both veins.²³ He uses an abbreviated literal version of the Genesis account. He also stays close to a literal understanding of Sarah, and Nonna and Gorgia, as the personified wisdom of Proverbs 31. He alludes to the Galatian allegory when he departs from his straightforward narrative and ventures into a "more philosophical" mode, as he puts it, as shall be shown.

The New Abraham and Sarah

From his earliest works Gregory identified his parents with Sarah and the Patriarch Abraham.²⁴ In *Oration 1*, "On Easter," written after his ordination in 361, he refers to his father as Abraham and speaks of him in the context of God's promise to Abraham.

²¹Annaweis van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and his Usage of Philo in the Stromata* (Leiden, 1989), p.44. She says that Philo used Homer's allegorized Penelope motif in working with the Sarah tradition. I note also that a "typological" Penelope tradition was used by the Emperor Julian in his "Panegyric in Honor of the Empress Eusebia," wherein he favorably compared the virtuous Empress to Penelope. For more on the allegory see A. van den Hoek, "Mistress and Servant: An Allegorical Theme in Philo, Clement and Origen," *Origeniana Quarta*, 314-48; and Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality, Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, W. Hibberd, trans. (1960).

²²Ibid.

²³For a late 4th century example of an allegorized account of the Abraham motif, see Gregory of Nyssa, "Answer to Eunomius" Book 2, PG 45.493C-96D; NPNF 5, 259; and also "On the Baptism of Christ," PG 46.588B; NPNF 5, p. 521. The allegory has Abraham in quest of what lies beyond what is known. Going out from his country means going out from his earthly body and forsaking the soul's senses. The goal is the knowledge that God is greater than what may be known, and the beholding of the archetype and beauty.

²⁴Rosemary Ruether makes a distinction between Gregory the Theologian's use of Old Testament figures as being pagan *synkris* rather than Christian typology, but the distinction, if true, makes no difference in my analysis. See Rosemary Ruether, *Gregory Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford, 1969), p. 103.

These are the gifts give you by this august Abraham, this honorable and reverend head, this patriarch, this resting place of all good, this standard of virtue, this perfection of the priesthood, who today is bringing to the Lord his willing sacrifice, his only son, him of the promise.²⁵

The following year, 362, in writing *Or. 2*, “In Defense of His Flight to Pontos,” Gregory again identifies his elderly parents as the Patriarch Abraham and Sarah.²⁶ Several other elements of the tradition are present, including a nativity motif with Sarah—who travailed in his spiritual birth—spoken of as a spiritual teacher. This is an important characterization, since teaching others and leading them to God was one of the defining functions of both personified wisdom and of the Holy Spirit.

In what can be considered strong evidence of his anti-Manichean stance, Gregory makes a point that is repeated frequently when mentioning Abraham and Sarah—the importance of Old Testament stories, people and experiences as paradigms of Christian behavior.

I remember the days of old, and recurring to one of the ancient histories, drew counsel for myself therefrom as to my present conduct; for let us not suppose these events to have been recorded without a purpose, nor that they are a mere assemblage of words and deeds gathered together for the pastime of those who listen to them, as a kind of bait for the ears, for the sole purpose of giving pleasure.²⁷

Gregory then declares his high valuation of even the smallest detail of the Old Testament.

. . . We, however, who extend the accuracy of the Spirit to the merest stroke and title, will never admit the impious assertion that even the smallest matters were dealt with haphazard by those who have recorded them, and have thus been born in mind down to the present day; on the contrary, their purpose has been to supply memorials and instructions for our

²⁵*Or. 1.7*, PG 35.400C-D; NPNF 7, p. 204.

²⁶*Or. 2.103*, PG 35.501D-04B; NPNF 7, p. 225.

²⁷*Ibid.*

consideration under similar circumstances should such befall us, and the examples of the past might serve as rules and models for our warning and imitation.²⁸

In the spring of 369 Gregory again speaks of his parents in his panegyric “On the Death of His Brother Caesarios.”²⁹ Gregory’s father is identified as a second Aaron or Moses and Nonna is once more depicted as the spiritual teacher and guide. Significantly, she is given credit not only for passing on her saintly piety to her children and for their virtue, but also for leading her husband, a bishop, to perfection.

The assertion is bold, but I will make it—that not even her husband’s perfection was any other work than hers. How wonderful it is that a greater and more perfect piety was bestowed as the reward of piety!³⁰

Gregory employs an even more developed Sarah and Abraham theme in his “Panegyric to His Sister Gorgonia,” written before 374.³¹ It was from both her parents, “the new Abraham and Sarah of our time,” that Gorgonia derived her existence and her reputation. They were her models and great blessing who sowed in her the seeds of piety, according to Gregory. He gives an abbreviated Genesis account of Abraham and Sarah and draws a parallel between them and his parents. Nonna, however, goes beyond Sarah. She is the instigator of her husband’s relationship with God.

In this one point, if I may speak a little boldly, she surpassed Sarah herself . . . This good shepherd was the product of his wife’s prayers and guidance, and it was she who taught him the ideal of a good shepherd’s conduct. He nobly fled from

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Or. 7, PG 35.756B; *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzus and Saint Ambrose*, 22 (The Fathers of the Church: New York, 1953), 5-25; NPNF 7, p. 230.

³⁰PG 35.758-60; FOTC 7, NPNF 7, p. 231.

³¹Or. 8, PG 35.793; FOTC 22, 103-04; NPNF 7, p. 239. See Franz J. Dolger, “Nonna,” *Antike und Christentum, Kultur- Und Religionsgeschichtliche Studien*, Band 5, (Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung: Munster, 1936) 44-75; and Ruth Albrecht, *Das Leiben der heiligen Makrina auf dem Hintergrund der Thecla-Traditionen* (Göttingen, 1986), pp. 214-16.

his idols, and later even put demons to flight.³²

Gregory then concludes this extraordinary depiction, once again stressing the equality of his parents as paradigms of Christian virtue.

They have been one in honor, one in mind, one in soul, and their bond no less a union of virtue and intimacy with God than of the flesh. They are equal in length of life and grey hairs, equal in prudence and splendor, vying with each other and excelling all the rest. Bound but a little by the flesh, even before their dissolution they have been translated hence in spirit . . . They have been fairly and justly apportioned to the two sexes. He is the ornament of men, she of women, and not only an ornament, but also a pattern of virtue.³³

The sexual aspect of the marriage as depicted in this passage can bear scrutiny. The phrase “their bond no less a union of virtue and intimacy with God than of the flesh,”³⁴ suggests that Gregory did not view the two as mutually exclusive. That is, “intimacy and union with God” can coexist with “bonds of flesh,” i.e., sexual activity. In claiming that his parents were “bound but a little by the flesh,” Gregory makes no outright condemnation of sexual activity as did the Manicheans. The ideal of restraint in sexual relations in marriage was common in that period as noted, and should not be viewed as a particularly repressive requirement.

In the section on Gorgonia that follows, Gregory leaves the more narrative approach that he has been using and moves to a theoretical case for chastity within marriage, laying out his argument, as he puts it, “in a more philosophical and lofty strain.”³⁵ Gregory then depicts Gorgonia as a contemplative and an initiate into the heavenly mysteries. He succinctly summarizes the purpose and goal of the contemplative process—chastity and virginity.

Gorgonia’s native land was the heavenly Jerusalem, the city not seen by the eye but perceived by the mind, in which we

³²PG 35.794A-C; FOTC 22, 103; NPNF 7, p. 239.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵PG 35.796B; FOTC 22, pp. 104-05; NPNF 7, p. 240.

are citizens and whither we are hastening. Christ is a citizen there and His fellow citizens are the ‘company and the church of the first born who are enrolled in the heavens,’ and who feast about its great Founder, in contemplation of His glory. Her nobility lay in the preservation of the divine image, and in her assimilation to the Archetype, which is effected by reason and virtue and that pure desire, which forms ever more and more, in the things of God, those truly initiated in the heavenly mysteries, and, finally, in her knowledge of our origin, our nature, and our destiny.³⁶

Here again we have the Galatian reference, mentioned earlier, to the Jerusalem above, but on the whole Gregory is using Philo’s spiritualized account of the soul’s ascent, employed also by other Fathers,³⁷ in which Sarah is the way to wisdom.

In the important section that follows Gregory makes his most definitive anti-Manichean statement. He depicts Gorgia as one who through the use of mind and reason successfully combined virginity and marriage. He then presents his theory on the relative merit of “the two universal divisions of the life, I mean, the married and the unmarried state,” as he phrases it. The essence of Gregory’s position is that true virginity is not a physical state, but is present in those who, committed to God, lead a life of reasoned virtue.

... she avoided the disadvantages of both and chose and united the sublimity of the one with the security of the other... blending the virtues of the married and the unmarried states, and showing that neither of these binds us completely to or separates us from God. And, so the one of its very nature is not to be altogether shunned nor exclusively praised. But it is the mind which nobly presides over both marriage and virginity. These like raw materials are ordered and fashioned to virtue by the craftsman, reason.³⁸

Gregory then raises two theological issues of critical interest at that time: whether sexual relations within marriage are compatible

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷PG 35.797A-B; FOTC 22, p. 105; NPNF 7, p. 240.

³⁸Ibid.

with being a Christian, and whether a husband's "headship" over his wife negates Christ's headship and authority over her. Gregory defends sexual relations on the grounds that not only was sex (within marriage) a duty to the world, and "natural," but also that the creator, God himself, had given these laws to the flesh. Sexual relations are thus ordained by God. A married woman can be consecrated totally to God and still maintain a sexual relationship with her husband. One can conclude that, for Gregory, sexual relations were not in themselves evil, as the Manicheans believed, but part of the divine economy.

Though she was linked in carnal union, she was not on the account separated from the Spirit, nor, because she had her husband as her head did she ignore her first Head. When she had served the world and nature a little, to the extent that the law of the flesh willed it, or rather, He who imposed this law on the flesh, she consecrated herself wholly to God.³⁹

On the issue of a husband's "headship" over his wife, Gregory does not appear to interpret the Pauline injunction—that the husband is head to his wife—in a hierarchical sense. He articulates a concept of horizontal equality between Gorgonia and her husband who "instead of an unreasonable master" became "a good fellow servant." The point is that Gorgonia initially was on a higher spiritual level than her husband, who was not converted or baptized until well after their marriage. After that they were equally under the headship of God and in a state of equal virtue. Like her mother Nonna, Gorgonia was the force in converting her husband to Christianity and in dedicating the fruit of her spirit, her children's children, and the whole family and household to God, as Gregory says in the encomium.⁴⁰ The wise Christian wife and mother as the converter and spiritual teacher to her pagan husband plays a vital part in Gregory's theological rationale.

In the next section, Gregory continues his laudation of Gorgonia, citing the personified wisdom passages of Proverbs 31:

The divinely inspired Solomon in his instructive wisdom, I

³⁹PG 35.797B; FOTC p. 22, 106; NPNF 7, p. 241. See Verna E. F. Harrison, "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology," 462, for her comment on Gregory's concepts of male and female equality.

⁴⁰PG 35.797-800; FOTC 22, p. 106; NPNF 7, p. 240.

mean in his Proverbs, praises the woman who keeps her house and loves her husband. And in contrast to the woman who wanders abroad, who is uncontrolled and dishonorable . . .⁴¹

Gregory carefully follows the Proverbs 31 text. He praises Gorgonia's abilities as a housewife, then claims that to note only these would be to avoid alluding to her greatest perfection. And here she is indeed presented as personified wisdom. She was modest, sober, cheerful, tender, prudent, gentle, discreet, sympathetic, dignified, unadorned. She had a keen intellect, and counseled and advised not only her family, but "... everyone around, who treated her counsels and advice as a law not to be broken."⁴²

Her theological knowledge from both the scriptures and her own understanding was exceptional, according to Gregory's account.

Indeed in this respect she surpassed in her fortitude not only women but the most high-minded men, in her intelligent chanting of the psalms, in her reading, explanation, and timely recollection of the divine oracles.⁴³

So exemplary was Gorgonia that she reached a higher perfection in all the virtues than anyone else reached in even one. Gregory then lauds Gorgonia in an extended series of exclamations in hymnic form.

O nature of woman which overcame that of man in the common struggle for salvation, and proved male and female a distinction of body but not of soul!⁴⁴

It can be seen from this extensive analysis that Gregory unequivocally argues that asceticism and chastity can exist within marriage and that neither absolutely binds or separates one to or from God or the world.

Gregory makes the same case for "true virginity" in his panegyric "On the Death of His Father," delivered in 374. Gregory here addresses his mother as "the spiritual Sarah, equally yoked and equal

⁴¹PG 35.800-01; FOTC 22, p. 106-10; NPNF 7, p. 240-41.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³PG 35.805B-C; FOTC p. 22, 110-11; NPNF 7, p. 242.

⁴⁴Or. 18, PG 35.1040; FOTC p. 22, 155; NPNF 7, p. 257.

in years to our great father Abraham,"⁴⁵ when he asks Nonna to join in the funeral "philosophizing." Again, by this designation he is stressing the equality of his parents. And in the encomium he again cites Proverbs 31, claiming that had anyone from the ends of the earth and from every human stock attempted to bring about the best of possible marriages, he could not have found a better or more harmonious one than this.

I have heard the sacred scripture saying: Who shall find a valiant woman? and also that she is a gift of God, and that a good marriage is arranged by the Lord. . . . For the best of men and of women was so united that their marriage was more a union of virtue than of bodies. Although they surpassed all others, they themselves were so evenly matched in virtue, that they could not surpass each other.⁴⁶

Nonna, Gregory wrote, became not only a helpmate to his father, "but also a leader guiding him by deed and word to what was most excellent. . . . She was his master in piety." Gregory then describes Nonna, as he did Gorgonia, as combining the virginal with the married state.

She devoted herself to God and Divine things as though she were completely removed from household cares. In no wise, however, did she neglect one duty in fulfilling the other, rather she performed both more effectively by making one support the other . . . Who had a greater love for virginity, though she herself was under the bond of marriage?⁴⁷

In his *Or. 43*, a panegyric to Saint Basil the Great, Gregory refers once more to his father as the New Abraham and Patriarch who, even in his extreme old age, worked zealously on behalf of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸

After Gregory departs from Constantinople, he again uses the Sarah tradition in his autobiographical poetry. He calls his father

⁴⁵PG 35.992-93; FOTC p. 22, 124; NPNF 7, p. 256.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷PG 35.993; FOTC p. 22, 125; NPNF 7, p. 257.

⁴⁸PG 36.545C-D.

a second Patriarch Abraham⁴⁹ and compares Nonna to the Old Testament Anna, another of the barren women in the tradition to whom I referred. He describes Nonna imitating Anna in her prayer for a son she promises to dedicate to God. Nonna's prayer, like Anna's, is answered and Nonna offers Gregory at the altar, as Anna offered her son Samuel.⁵⁰

Gregory then uses the original Abraham and Sarah motif, depicting Nonna as his spiritual teacher and sacrificer and himself as Isaac.

He is the offspring of Sarah, late in motherhood. He is the root of the race, the product of hope and the divine promise. The priest is Abraham, and the victim, an illustrious Isaac . . . with holy books she sanctified my hands, and taking me into her arms she said 'this beloved child, the gift of God, soon to become a sacred victim, is a precious charge under escort to the altar.'⁵¹

In his "Epitaphia," written in his old age, Gregory compares Nonna favorably with other Old Testament women and he eulogizes Nonna extensively, again making the Sarah/Abraham parallel.

Beloved Sarah, Gregory's Nonna, the godly minded, who longed for Abraham's bosom—How did you leave your Isaac?—soon to be met face to face. O great miracle, never to die outside the temple and the sacrifice.⁵²

The point, however, has already been made. Gregory the Theologian, throughout his life, argued that marriage was, indeed, an honorable Christian state. He related personified wisdom to pious married women—Sarah, Anna, Nonna, and Gorgonia. As leaders in the faith, their actions in revealing and teaching about God are those of the Holy Spirit. The important part Nonna and Gorgonia played in converting their pagan husbands to Christianity is exemplary, as Gregory wrote. The great virtue and spirituality Nonna brought to

⁴⁹*De vita sua*, PG 1061; *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Three Poems, The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 75. Denis Meehan, trans. (Washington, D.C., 1987), p. 78.

⁵⁰*De rebus suis*, PG 37.1001-03, FOTC 75, p. 39-40.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²*Epitaphia* 27, PG 37.53-63, secs. 1135, 1140-49.

her husband, children, and community also makes a good case for married bishops. Finally, in opposition to Manichean sentiment, Gregory emphatically maintains that the body and sexuality are not evil. True chastity and virginity are possible to Christians, both in the married as well as the virginal state, and to lay people and clergy alike, as his parents, the new Abraham and Sarah, testify.



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Saint Gregory's Exegeses Against the Arians, Still a Viable Christian Tool

PAUL S. RUSSELL

IT HAS BECOME COMMON AMONG STUDENTS OF THE CHURCH FATHERS who engage in studies of the history of the exegesis of Scripture to do so with no expectation of discovering anything other than the many dissimilarities between their time and our own and between their methods and our own. I would like to offer, in this paper, a small attempt to demonstrate the other side of the coin, by undertaking an examination of Saint Gregory's method of reading Scripture as seen in his *Theological Orations*, and by considering the value of this for Christians of our own time.

In the *Theological Orations*, Saint Gregory shows a very detailed attention to the scriptural passages he treats. He uses his extensive grammatical and rhetorical training, as well as his common sense, to approach the texts. For example, in the fourth section of the fourth oration, Saint Gregory examines the meaning of "until," ἄχρι or ἕως in Greek, which has been used by his opponents to downgrade the reign of Christ, and thus his divinity, by citing such verses as 1 Cor 15.25: "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Saint Gregory first states the proper grammatical function of "until" in the following words:

... you suffer this [difficulty of comprehension] because you do not understand that "until" does not wholly divide off the future but can govern "up to" some time but not deny what lies beyond it.

Having located this as the root of the Arians' misunderstanding, Saint Gregory puts forward for examination a particular scriptural verse as an example of one that would be misunderstood if the Arian reading of "until" were accepted: Mt 28.20: ". . . lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." The Arian reading of "until," when applied to this verse, would limit Christ's kingdom to existing in this "world" only. In this case we can see that Saint Gregory has determined the meaning of this scriptural idea "until" by a consideration of what the word means in language in general, and by the addition of a scriptural example as proof that his point is valid there as well. We should note that he does not permit the meaning of the word in Scripture to be widened beyond its general meaning to fit a theological presupposition, as the Arians desired to do. The controlling factor here is the use of the word in common diction. So, the language of Scripture is treated by Saint Gregory as consistent with secular language.

We should note a further example of Saint Gregory treating scriptural language as common language: in the tenth section of the fourth oration, where Saint Gregory examines the meaning of δύναμαι by collating its various occurrences in Scripture. The Arians have appealed to John 5.19—"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do"—to support their position that He is a lesser being than the Father. Saint Gregory puts forward, as rebuttal, a series of different instances of the use of "cannot," both scriptural and secular, which show that it is possible for "cannot" to refer only to the particular circumstances discussed or to a choice not to do something, as well as to a true lack of ability.

In this set of clear examples, Saint Gregory can fairly claim to have shown that the range of meaning for δύναμαι necessary for a clear understanding of its use in Scripture is too wide to fit the rigid reading of the Arians. Behind this practice of mixing scriptural and non-scriptural examples and applying to them equally the same sort of rational grammatical analysis lies a tacit assumption that language in scripture functions as language does elsewhere. This makes possible explaining Scriptural language by referring to language beyond its bounds. Saint Gregory will not allow Scripture to be bound to a standard which does not coincide with how its language is actually used. As in the previous example, Saint Gregory here treats the language of Scripture on the human level as recognition of its susceptibility to human foibles. The revelation may spring from a divine

source but it enters fully into the created realm.

In the fifth section of the third oration, in the face of an Arian claim that the Son “was begotten” at a particular time and so had a beginning—the archetypal Arian claim—Saint Gregory mentions how well-known the idiosyncracy of the use of verb tenses is in Scripture: no one presumes to make much of the odd appearance of past or future tenses where they would not be used in normal speech. All students of biblical Hebrew are now aware that this difficulty with the Septuagint translation springs from a misunderstanding of Hebrew grammar and rhetoric, but Saint Gregory’s point is nevertheless correct and valid. Again, the strict rules the Arians put forward are shown to be inapplicable, and the language of Scripture is treated as it is rather than according to rules imposed from the outside.

In the third and eighteenth sections of the fifth oration Saint Gregory castigates those who lose the sense of Scripture by over-attention to the letter—in this case, those who would deny true divinity to the Spirit because it is never explicitly stated in Scripture. Against these people, Saint Gregory counters that the truth about the Spirit communicated by Scripture is in the attributes of the Spirit reported there; Gregory recounts them in section 29 and following. They are too many for us to enumerate now. Suffice it to say that the list includes both the Spirit’s actions, such as its effect on the apostles in the second chapter of Acts, as well as the titles the Spirit receives, such as being called “the Spirit of God” in 1 Corinthians 2.11. Since these are the actions and titles of Divinity, the Spirit must be divine, Saint Gregory concludes. His desire to discern the meaning of Scripture from what lies *in* it rather than by matching frameworks *to* it is again evident. Saint Gregory’s collecting of verses relating to the Spirit to gain a sense of the Scriptural witness as a whole (its σχοτός) shows his aim of gaining a balanced view of the evidence.

Rather than draw their theological vocabulary and usage from Scripture, the neo-Arians customarily chose to argue from the starting point of the names or “terms” they preferred, and then to apply these to the realities they were meant to describe, as R. P. C. Hanson states in his recent history of the controversy.¹ By seeking the guidance of the whole of Scripture through the compilation and study of these lists, Saint Gregory argues against choosing theological

¹ R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 606.

vocabulary apart from the reading of Scripture, and stands for a more engaged method of interpretation and exposition. He wishes to be guided by Scripture in his choice of words as well as his ideas, but wishes to treat language, even in the Scriptural revelation, as a human form of communication rather than as a puzzle to be deciphered.²

What does Saint Gregory do if the plain sense of Scripture is not immediately clear? This is the weak point of any attempt to speak with "common sense." In this situation, Saint Gregory turns further into Scripture for guidance by comparing the passage in question with other similar ones or other occurrences of the difficult elements. So, in three places in the fourth oration,³ we find Saint Gregory interpreting one verse of Scripture by reference to another. This method requires the assumption that the various books of Scripture form a unified revelation, a traditional premise of Christian argument Saint Gregory was glad to accept.⁴

On this point, Saint Gregory's treatment of Scripture is not unusual for his time. It is only at the close of the orations⁵ that Saint

² See Hanson, pp. 827-28, where he comments on the contrast between the Nicene and Arian use of language: "The insistence of the Arians upon pressing the analogy or metaphor of Father and Son too far drove the pro-Nicenes to examine the nature of language about God and to become markedly more sophisticated than their opponents about using it. They warn against too great rationalism in exegesis. They can even protest against a too wooden and factual acceptance of the words of Scripture, especially when dealing with the first chapters of Genesis: God did not literally walk nor literally speak, and so on. Almost everybody had learnt from Origen the doctrine of "accommodation," that is the idea that God accommodates his language and ideas when communicating with people to the limitations of their understanding and even of their culture. And the pro-Nicenes are quite often ready to appeal behind the words of Scripture to their intention or drift (*skopos*)."
See also 849, where a sense of the σχοτός of Scripture is praised by Hanson as legitimate. It is the rigidity of this Arian rational exegesis that Gregory attempts to replace with a more flexible reading of Scripture.

³ *Or. 30.6, 30.13, and 30.14.*

⁴ H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth. A Study in the relations between Orthodoxy and heresy in the Early Church* (London, 1954), pp. 263-64, discusses the prevalence of the conviction of the unity of Scriptural revelation in the Patristic period. "The unity of the two Testaments was almost an axiom for the Fathers." Turner provides a host of citations, predominantly from Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Origen's views on this matter would certainly have been widely known during the fourth century, but even without that concrete evidence of the presence of this idea in the theological writings prior to the Arian Controversy, intelligent reading of Patristic writings makes quite clear that virtually no Father would have even considered the possibility that Scripture was anything other than a seamless whole. The idea of a σχοτός of Scripture in itself implies unity.

⁵ *Or. 31.21-24.*

Gregory's assertions about the scriptural revelation set him apart from the rest of his contemporaries. In these remarkable pages, Saint Gregory asserts that the use in theological discussion of non-scriptural words and phrases is inevitable because of the nature of the Scriptural witness.⁶ We are not to shy away from stating clearly what is never stated clearly in Scripture itself but only implied. The way to stay true to Scripture is *not* to cling slavishly to the words of the Book and only those, but rather to discern the meaning of those words and hold to *that* firmly and express *that* clearly.⁷ Those who would be true to Scripture must digest and express its message, not merely parrot its words. If the passage appears to be at odds with the σχοτός it must be understood in light of the σχοτός. The presumed coherence of the revelation is given greater weight than any particular oddity. There could be no more emphatic way of stating his interest in the message of Scripture rather than the wording by which it is conveyed.

So, for Saint Gregory, the voice of Scripture is unified, though not always explicit in its message. Its details require the greatest attention on their *own* terms, and, what is most difficult, words and passages must be read in their own contexts to be properly understood, as the discussions of δύναμαι and verb tenses show, but can also be illuminated by comparison with other parts of the Revelation. The interpreter must apply to each passage all of the tools at his disposal, and rely on the tradition and the Church to guide him as he works through these steps.⁸

⁶ *Or. 31.32.*

⁷ Cf. 31.24.8 ff. Norris, in his recent commentary, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning. The Five Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzen* (Leiden, 1991), says, on page 205, in reference to this passage: “The adversaries, both Eunomians and Pneumatomachians (the former here in focus), are like Jewish literalists because they think the letter is the most important aspect of the text. They do not grasp that the fundamental meaning of any Biblical passage is the reality about which it speaks, τὰ νοόμενα, not the actual words in which it speaks, τὰ λεγόμενα.” This is, in fact, an argument for the σχοτός of Scripture to have precedence over the wording of a particular passage.

⁸ The importance of the tradition of the Church in the matter of the divinity of the Spirit is shown by its being introduced by Saint Gregory in *Or. 31.21* before he starts his discussion of the nature of Scripture. Under Saint Gregory's schema, the theologian operating without the control of the tradition is sure to go wrong at some point, because the multiplicity and flexibility of the tools at his command offer too many branching paths from which to choose. It is telling that Saint Gregory places this argument against over-literalism just before he discusses the nature of scriptural language. He wishes to plead for intelligent reading, not merely detailed reading.

Let us now summarize how Saint Gregory has dealt with Scripture in these orations. He has applied the rules of grammar to the scriptural text in his treatment of the Arian arguments based on "until" and "cannot." This means that Saint Gregory assumes and acts upon the rationality of the use of language in Scripture. He treats the words of Scripture as human language, not as divine utterances divorced from all else we know. Scripture, in this scheme, meets us on our own ground.

Saint Gregory has recognized the illogical or incoherent aspects of the revelation as he has received it. The tenses of verbs in Scripture are not always correct according to human usage. This aspect of its language *must not* be treated according to our usual human rules. This moves Saint Gregory's approach beyond that of a grammarian. He is using a critical faculty beyond linguistic expertise. He is able to distance himself from the text of Scripture enough to appraise it as a whole and to realize when it is not susceptible to the tools he has at his command. In this case Saint Gregory decides to leave the text alone as not amenable to human rationalization. It is a rare exegete who has the courage to back away from the inexplicable and leave it unexplained. Saint Gregory is willing to recognize Scripture's special nature as well as its congruence with human experience.

This leads to Saint Gregory's stated desire not to lose the message of the whole through concern for mere details. For example, the lack of a formal statement as to the divine status of the Spirit does not mean that it is not divine or that we cannot know its true nature. We must evaluate what Scripture tells us at a level beyond that of syntax and vocabulary. The real messages Scripture conveys are not *in* the words of the text but are carried *by* those words. Thence comes the logic of appealing to other places in Scripture to puzzle out a difficult passage. The difficulty of the particular wording can be overcome and its meaning reached by application to a similar place where the meaning is clear.

These three angles of approach are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. They recognize in Scripture its overriding message, its special nature as the divine revelation, and its real entry into the created realm. Saint Gregory has treated Scripture as both divine and yet subject to human comprehension, at least in its general trends and central points.

How is this relevant to our own situation? Admittedly, the exegetical method described is not one we would be moved to call

complete in every way. For example, it does not include any mention of the effect of the difference between the interpreter's time and customs and those of the human authors and actors in the Scriptural books, though the discussion of the use of verb tenses is related to this distinction. In this regard we must remember that we are reading a particular portion of an argument put forward for a particular purpose. Saint Gregory is not discussing the use of Scripture in these orations, he is discussing our knowledge of the nature of God. There is no reason for us to expect a complete treatment. Of the points Saint Gregory is moved to make in his argument we can say:

1) Saint Gregory allows real and serious scholarly engagement with the details of the texts he treats. He approaches the language of Scripture as human language and expects to meet it on a level he can understand.

2) Saint Gregory admits and allows for Scripture to be both coherent as a whole and also to contain a wide array of illogical and inexplicable elements, as his acceptance of its unity and the illogicality of its verbal usage show. He neither holds it as a faultless extra-creational artifact or admits that God would offer an incoherent revelation. Both of these points still seem indispensable for a Christian of our time.

3) Saint Gregory demands that we be willing to discuss and defend the content of Scripture rather than merely to repeat it. He acknowledges that the enemies of the Christian message require more than hearing the Scripture to be refuted. Have we not seen in our studies and our own experience that this is correct?

Saint Gregory demands real engagement with the scriptural revelation, that is, real application of the human mind to it. He is also adamant, however, that this be undertaken in an atmosphere that accepts its power, coherence and ultimate value. Does this not allow for both scholarship and faith? Is this not a "common sense" Christian approach to Scripture? R. P. C. Hanson, very reluctant to praise the Fathers' treatment of Scripture in his recent history of the period of the Arian Controversy, offers perhaps his most admiring words to describe Saint Gregory's efforts in this area,⁹ which form a suitable close to this paper:

Among all the biblical expositors of the fourth century Gregory

⁹ Hanson, *The Search*, p. 846.

brings to bear on the text the greatest force of ordinary common sense.



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The Christian Call to Love: The Influence of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society on the Orthodox Social Ethos in America

MARIA-FOTINI POLIDOU LIS

IN 1931, UNDER THE EDICT OF ARCHBISHOP ATHENAGORAS, THE NATIONAL Chapter of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society was established in the Americas. This philanthropic organization became the contemporary American expression of those attitudes towards social issues and concerns which existed throughout the Orthodox Church's 2000 year history. This organization brought about a revival of those attitudes which had dominated the Orthodox Church throughout its history, especially from the fourth Century on.

However, this expression of social concern did not materialize in America without undergoing intense "labor pains." The Greek Orthodox Church, in the early years of its existence in the New World, was a Church whose vision was inward, as its focus was that of basic survival in what was deemed an alien and hostile environment.

Survival for the early immigrants entailed preserving their national identity, by involving themselves with the issues prevalent in the motherland. As a result of this, division occurred within the body of the Greek Orthodox Church in America. The message of love, and its praxis of outreach, at the heart of the Christian Gospel, was for the most part buried under the Greek's inward struggles for national identity. Linked to this message of love, was the Orthodox social ethos.

It was not until the election of Archbishop Athenagoras to the Americas that this social ethos, developed by the early Church Fathers,

with the Christian message of *agape* (love) at its core, would find the means of expressing itself in the New World through the philanthropic Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society.

Thus, this paper will deal with the American expression of the Orthodox social ethos in four parts. First, the social ethos of the Orthodox Church will be explained as it is an intrinsic part of Orthodox theology. Second, the actual immigrant experience of the Greek Orthodox will be examined, and the immigrants' inward focus of survival over their outward vision of Christian outreach. Third, the influence which Archbishop Athenagoras had upon the Greek Orthodox Church in America with the establishment of the Ladies Philoptochos Society as the national Orthodox philanthropic organization, will be addressed. Lastly, this paper will display the parallels that exist between the Ladies Philoptochos Society and the philanthropy of the early Church Fathers, and how the Philoptochos could thus be said to be a revival of the Orthodox historical social ethos, and a modern expression of Patristic philanthropy.

The Orthodox Social Ethos

At the core of the Ladies Philoptochos Society in America rests the historic Orthodox social ethos. This social ethos (attitude) of the Orthodox Church has always focused on the individual rather than upon his or her social environment. It is the belief that it is the collective of individuals who foster and make up the social environment, and that unless these individuals change inwardly, repent and reach out to their fellow human beings, the social environment will never truly change. "Orthodox theology views human nature as a synthetic whole in which all drives and impulses of man must become subject to the control of higher values, all of which derive from God and must serve God's people."¹ The primary concern of the Orthodox faith is for the renewal of each human being's inner life. Society's transformation is to be found through these renewed persons. In turn, it is from these transformed societies that the whole state and the whole world are to find the potential for their own renewal.² As it is stated in the Bible, "A little leaven leavens all the dough."³

¹ Demetrios J. Constantelos, "The Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church" in *God and Charity: Images of Eastern Orthodox Theology, Spirituality, and Practice*, ed. Francis D. Costa (Brookline, 1979), p. 85.

² Ibid.

³ 1 Corinthians 5.5.

However, there is more to social involvement for the Orthodox than simply focusing on the individual. It is not enough to put the responsibility on the other, but also upon the self. It is a call not only to spiritual awareness, but to action and social involvement. It is a call not to justice, but to *agape* (love) and compassion. It is a call to obey the one commandment of Christ, to Love one another.⁴ As stated by Demetrios Constantelos, it is from here that the social ethos of the Orthodox Church emanates. Humanity is called to be Godlike, and this includes imitating God in his love for all human persons. Thus, when there is agape among men, the Kingdom of Heaven is reflected on earth. God manifested his love for humankind in the event of the incarnation of the eternal *Logos* (Word), in the person of Jesus Christ.⁵

From a theological point of view and from a historical perspective, the social character of the Church is the application of the doctrinal teaching concerning God and human beings, and human beings with respect to their social relations. Social ethos, as the result of applied ethics, is solidly based on theological presuppositions.⁶

In Orthodox theology, *theosis* (divinisation) is obtained by an individual only through energetic love for God and human persons. It is obtained by becoming Christlike. It is not simply to love one another, but to do so as Christ has loved us.⁷ Thus, what Christ did, the Church must do, as it is an “extension of the perpetuation of the person and the work of Christ here on earth.”⁸ As can be attested by the history of the Orthodox Church, and as we will see below, social involvement was in the forefront of Christian Orthodox living. The emphasis was the salvation of the individual soul as well as the redemption of the Christian community; however, for the Orthodox the former brings about the latter. It is not by placing restrictive social law to enforce charitable behavior but by the unlimited bounds of love that leads to action that society is changed.

⁴ John 13.34.

⁵ Constantelos, “The Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church,” p. 75.

⁶ Ibid. pp. 75-76.

⁷ John 13.34.

⁸ Constantelos, *God and Charity*, p. 76.

Is one to assume then that the Orthodox—especially the Greeks—who landed upon American shores brought this social ethos with them? As we will see, the Greek Orthodox experience of the Orthodox Church has always been an intrinsic part of its theology, however, after the fall of Constantinople, and with it the Christian Orthodox Byzantine Empire, the outward vision was confined due to the basic need of survival which forced the Orthodox living in hostile circumstances to turn inward. This does not mean that philanthropy disappeared from Orthodoxy, but that it was focused only upon its own orthodox people.

In its beginnings, the Greek Orthodox experience in America was again that of ethnic survival and inward in focus. Yet this focus was centered more on politics and national identity rather than on Christian identity. It was not until 1931, with the election of Athenagoras as Archbishop of North and South America that the Greek Orthodox started to recognize the importance of the Orthodox part of their identity in its own rite.

The shift which occurred in the 1930s under Archbishop Athenagoras was a shift from the politics of being Greek and identifying oneself with the motherland to the spirituality of being an Orthodox Christian in the New World, and recovering the roots of true Orthodoxy.

One of the greatest achievements of Archbishop Athenagoras was the establishment of the Archdiocesan Philoptochos Society (Friends of the Poor), whose purpose was to undertake the war against poverty.⁹ This all-woman organization brought at long last the Orthodox social ethos into the American spotlight, and revived the essence of the Orthodox Christian message of *agape* (love). However, even this outward call to love was inward in vision with the Philoptochos focusing its attention only upon the Greek Orthodox Americans rather than upon the American people as a whole.

The Immigration Experience

America has always been seen by those oppressed and afflicted by poverty in “Old World” Europe as the new land of “Milk and Honey.” For these down hearted, it was the land of hope and promise, where fortune could be made and dreams realized. America

⁹ George Papaioannou, *From Mars Hill to Manhattan* (Minneapolis, 1976), p. 122.

was the land where streets were paved with gold, and sidewalks littered with money. Her shores promised freedom, liberty, and opportunity, and upon these shores, many peoples from different nations, with unique and unusual customs, languages, and beliefs, swarmed.

The Greeks were no different. Oppressed by Turkish rule for centuries, the first wave of Greek settlers, four to five hundred, landed on American shores on June 26, 1768 and settled in New Smyrna, Florida to work on the plantations of Dr. Andrew Turnbull.¹⁰ However, this first wave of Greek settlers faced appalling conditions, with over half dying within the first two years. The colonists eventually revolted, and the settlement, after nine short years, was abandoned.¹¹

It would seem that after a lifetime of oppression under Turkish rule in the Old Country, and after shattered dreams in the New Land, some type of social awareness or consciousness would have emerged within the Greek Orthodox community in America. However, there was no such occurrence. The first wave of settlers were not accompanied by an Orthodox priest. Therefore, most took refuge in the Roman Catholic Church soon after their arrival, contrary to the hopes of the British King who anticipated that the new settlers would embrace Protestantism within ten years of settlement.¹² The first wave of Greek Orthodox colonists in America may have managed to retain some aspects of their Greek character; however, their Orthodox identity was assimilated and totally lost.

The era of mass Greek migration occurred after the Greek War of Independence (1821-1827).¹³ Free from the cages of oppression, the fire of Greek Nationalism burned strong in the hearts of each man, woman and child. There was a deep love for the motherland, despite the political instability in which she found herself after her newly acquired independence; however, poverty and hunger pushed many off her shores and onto the ones across the Atlantic.

Without a doubt, the overriding motive for Greek migration to America was economic advancement. It was the intent of the vast majority of immigrants to return to Greece with ample capital so as

¹⁰Charles C. Moskos, Jr. *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success* (Englewood Cliffs, 1980), p. 3.

¹¹Ibid. p. 4.

¹²Papaioannou, *From Mars Hill to Manhattan*, p. 23.

¹³Moskos, *Greek Americans*, p. 5.

to live the remainder of their lives comfortably in their home villages. The least of their expectations was to procure sufficient funds for the dowries of their daughters and sisters.¹⁴

The only major exception to the immigrant goal of returning home were the Greeks who came from what is today Turkey. Correctly foreseeing that the abhorring Turkish republic would reverse the relative tolerance that the older Ottoman order had displayed towards its non-Muslim minorities, these Greeks saw their move to America as a permanent one. . . . Why is it that many Ottoman Greeks chose as their destination the faraway and strange America over the nearby and familiar “free Greece”? Again the answer is simple—money.¹⁵

Unlike the first Greek settlers at New Smyrna, the new wave of immigrants brought with them their own Orthodox clergy. The earliest Greek Orthodox Church in America, dedicated to Sts. Constantine and Helen, was established in 1862 in the seaport city of Galveston, Texas. Founded by the Greeks, this parish served Orthodox of numerous ethnic backgrounds.¹⁶ Between 1862 and 1922, the year the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in North and South America was established, 141 Greek Orthodox Churches were founded.¹⁷

Surely these priests helped to enforce the Orthodox social ethos in their parishioners? However, this did not seem to be the case. What was enforced and clung to with die hard passion was the Greek identity, rather than true Orthodox Christianity.

According to Nicon Patrinacos, the first priests who came to America did not come on behalf of the Church. They had no mandate or authority from their hierarch to guide the experience of the newly transplanted and agonized Greek Orthodox laymen who were struggling to establish a better life for themselves and their loved ones. These first priests came as immigrants themselves, and as such had to struggle with the same psychological confusion of being uprooted as all the other immigrants. They, too, had to learn to live

¹⁴Ibid. pp. 9-10.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Miltiades B. Efthimiou, and George A. Christopoulos, (eds.), *History of the Greek Orthodox Church in America* (New York, 1984), p. 1.

¹⁷Ibid. p. 4.

in a world whose language was foreign and whose culture was alien. However, by sharing the same problems of the lay immigrants, the clergy proved to be of invaluable help to them by offering the comfort and reassurance of worship and that inward strength that derives from receiving the sacraments.

Patrinacos continues to state that despite this, these priests, being for the most part marginally better educated than their new parishioner, failed to see the importance of learning the language of the New World as quickly as possible in order to be better able to serve their congregations. Many of them, after living in the New World for thirty or forty years, were still unable to speak to any great degree the English language.

Unable to communicate with their environment, and thus finding themselves moving from one difficult and emotionally painful situation to another, the immigrants clung to the Greek language not only as a symbol of their traditions and ethnic identity, but as the sole instrument of retaining the Greek character and life.¹⁸

The problems which the Greeks in America faced were new and unfamiliar. In the Motherland, they were merely financial. In the New Land, where obtaining their fortunes proved not to be difficult, they were cultural.

In his native land the Greek immigrant occupied a certain status and played a particular role under the umbrella of a culture that was indigenous to the country and native to him. There were a number of written and unwritten codes and modes of behavior, which demanded his loyalty and obedience but supplied him as well with protection and rights. In other words, he lived in an environment in which he could grow, protected against those potential enemies that might have attempted to destroy his inner order and the peace that derives from such an orderly coexistence between his thoughts, emotions, and will.

The tragedy, then of the immigrant began with finding himself deprived of the inner security that a culture provides

¹⁸Nicon D. Patrinacos, "The Role of the Church in the Evolving Greek American Community" in *The Greek American Community in Transition*, ed. Harry J. Psomiades (New York, 1982), p. 123-24.

to the individual born in it and burdened with an inward confusion resulting from a conflict between credos, moral codes, and the emotional turmoil generated by a communication barrier.¹⁹

This caused the Greeks in America to turn inward. As in the Old Country under Ottoman rule, where closed self-preservation and basic survival rather than openness and outreach was the mind set of day to day living, so in America self-preservation became the order of the day. Thus, the Greek American turned to the inner world which he had brought with him. Issues important to Americans were not only unimportant to the Greeks, but in most cases they were ignorant of their very existence.

For the Greek immigrant, survival was the only social issue, and the priest here, as in the old country, was its key player. According to Patrinacos, his role in protecting and preserving the sanity and progress of the immigrant during the early stages of community growth has proved invaluable.²⁰

His goal, however, was not personal religion, but group religious expression and an adherence to the ideals of the ethnic heritage, which he was avowedly promulgating at all times. . . . However, the immigrant priest cannot be held responsible for neglecting his true call in the eyes of God, for he came from an environment in which personal religion was limited to emotional religious expression, while the moral character of the individual was expected to be shaped by group mores and group ideologies and, above all, by ethnic objectives and ideals.²¹

So imbedded with their Greek identity did these immigrants become, that the politics of the motherland also took root in the soil of the New World. Greek politics at this time were very chaotic. The two "warring" parties, the Royalists supporting King Constantine, and the National Unity Party supporting Eleftherios Venizelos as Prime Minister, literally caused a rift within the Church. In America,

¹⁹Ibid. p. 124.

²⁰Ibid. p. 125.

²¹Ibid.

parishes, mostly due to the promulgating clergy, were split among political party lines.²²

Though the Greeks' physical presence was in America, their mentality was still "at home." Even their focus on philanthropy was towards the homeland. For example, the philanthropic focus during the First World War was for the Near East Relief fund of the Ecumenical Patriarchate which was to assist widows and orphans in the Homeland.²³ There is no evidence at this point in Greek American history of social concern or awareness for those in America on a *broad* Church level. What did exist were small parish philanthropic groups, led by women, which dealt in assisting those in the parish who needed aid. These groups were called Philoptochos (friends of the poor) Societies, and were not new in the New World. The idea of Philoptochos was brought to America from Asia Minor where the cause of philanthropy was greatly advanced by the Greek Orthodox there.²⁴ The first, according to Despina Vrahopoulos, and most popular of these Philoptochos groups was established in 1905, in the parish of Holy Trinity in New York City by the Rev. Methodios Kourkoulis, from Smyrna, Asia Minor.²⁵ Obviously, as it had its roots in the Old World, this group was governed in accordance with the By-Laws of the Ladies Philoptochos of Smyrna.²⁶

Most of its members were women of the leading families of the Greek community at that time, some of whom were the wives of the personnel of Rallis Ltd. of London and India, and who offered invaluable services to the poor immigrants who were abused everywhere as undesirable. With tremendous economic means at their disposal, and their social connections with the American aristocracy, they were active in helping and freeing Greek immigrants whether in jails or at the immigration depot at Castle Garden, Ellis Island.²⁷

²²Papaioannou, *From Mars Hill to Manhattan*, p. 35.

²³Personal conclusion based on readings of the Archdiocese Encyclicals dealing with Social and Philanthropic Concerns from 1922 to 1930. Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Encyclicals and Documents of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America* (Thessaloniki, 1976).

²⁴Papaioannou, *From Mars Hill to Manhattan*, p. 123.

²⁵Ibid. and *National Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society: Fiftieth Anniversary (1931-1981)* (New York, 1982), p. 21.

²⁶Papaioannou, *From Mars Hill to Manhattan*, pp. 123-24.

²⁷Ibid. p. 124.

member, and received recognition as a philanthropic organization by the State of New York from which it received its character.²⁸ However, in 1931, "its last president Mrs. Eriphily Vrahonos turned over its charter to His Eminence, Archbishop Athenagoras, thus becoming the nucleus of the new National Philoptochos."²⁹

was dividing the Orthodox Church in America, the Ecumenical Patriarch dismissed Alexander as Archbishop in the Americas on June 19, 1930, and in his place was elected the Metropolitan of Kerkyra (Corfu) Athenagoras on August 13, 1930.³⁰

Under the new Archbishop, the political tensions which were on the threshold of breaking the Church simmered down. The seemingly fatal political wounds inflicted upon the Greek Orthodox Church were starting to heal. With the antagonism gone, and the hate subsiding, Christian love had a chance to take root and grow.

Archbishop Athenagoras "felt that the basic characteristic and teaching of Christianity is charity in all of its forms and set as one of his major goals to advance the charitable feelings of his faithful in America."³¹ Thus, at the Archdiocese Fourth General Assembly in New York City in November 1931, establishing the Philoptochos Society as the official philanthropic auxiliary of the Church was an important item on the agenda.³² It was the decision of the Assembly to merge all of the existing chapters, numbering over 300, under one national women's organization "to function under the Archdiocese constitution with specific By-laws issued for the Philoptochos."³³ Archbishop Athenagoras wasted no time developing the proper legal structure necessary for the new organization. Recognizing the importance of the Holy Trinity Philoptochos' charter from the State of New York, "the Archbishop and executive committee of the National Society deemed it prudent to utilize this Incorporation."³⁴ Thus, as stated above, the charter was presented to the Archbishop, and subsequently a

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid. pp. 39-40.

³¹Ibid. p. 123.

³²*National Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society*, p. 23.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

Central Council was appointed which included the executive committee of the Holy Trinity Philoptochos Society, and the presidents of all Philoptochos Chapters in the greater New York Area, with the Archbishop serving as President.³⁵

For the following few months, the Philoptochos Societies continued working independently, aiding the sick, the needy, the poor, the imprisoned, and the impoverished. They continued to serve on educational committees, organize choirs, bake the “prosforo,”³⁶ sew the Altar cloth, offer friendship and fellowship to newcomers, as well as support a variety of civic and community programs to raise funds for their respective parishes.³⁷

On October 20, 1932, the Archbishop issued his first encyclical to all the parish philanthropic chapters, listing a series of By-Laws and Guidelines under which the organization would function under the Constitution of the Archdiocese.³⁸ In his letter he expressed his joy for the establishment of this united sisterhood, whose purpose was to strengthen the philanthropic outreach of the Church, by serving and assisting the local chapters, and presenting an organized program to the Greek community.³⁹

The Greek Orthodox Church was beginning to embrace its social ethos. However, it is no coincidence that the emergence of the National Philoptochos Society coincided with the Great Depression. With misery so blatantly on the faces of his spiritual children, it would have been impossible for any true Christian heart, let alone that of an Archbishop who had always been conscious of the poor, to have turned away, from those in need. Feeling for his people, and the urgency of the matter, Athenagoras wasted no time in getting a major charitable campaign underway on the national level. In his encyclical he is as quoted saying:

“These are crucial and desperate times, there are many who are unemployed, deserted, orphans, poor, old, sick and other suffering people waiting for your action.”⁴⁰

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Prosforo. Greek term used to describe the special bread used for the Eucharist.

³⁷*National Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society*, p. 23.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Athenagoras, *Encyclical letter to the women of the Archdiocese*, announcing the formation of the National Board of Philoptochos, October 20, 1932, GAA.

Establishing a strong central Philanthropic society, with chapters in each parish made it possible for the Church to reach out to those who truly needed Christian compassion and aid during those troubled years, through its central organized programs.

The interesting thing about the establishment of the National Board was the gentle push given it by the Archbishop to begin to look outward. Even though the Philoptochos' basic purpose was to "minister" specifically to Greek Orthodox in America, it was nonetheless, encouraged to also start working together with already existing secular social institutions.

Appealing to the women to join in the crusade of the National Board and become members, [Athenagoras] admonished: "be a part of this national movement and begin to solicit funds, food, clothing and anything else that will bring relief to our needy brethren; provide housing and cooperate with the Welfare Department of your city and other philanthropic institutions for better results."⁴¹

Though the Philoptochos' primal function was to reach out those in need, and though Archbishop Athenagoras encouraged them to network with other social organizations, this did not mean that the total vision of the Orthodox Church had turned outward. The Philoptochos was also seen as a good means in which to strengthen the family unit's ties among not only the Greeks but also with the Church.

[Athenagoras] warns the women, however, not to join Philoptochos for titles and honors, but to advance the organization's mission which is "care for the needy and the advancement of the work of Christ." This does not mean, of course, that the members will receive no benefits and rewards; the most important benefit is the Christian fellowship, that will help the Greek Orthodox women to get to know each other better and thus bring the Greek Orthodox families closer to each other and to the church.⁴²

A point of interest arises due to the all female character of the

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

Philoptochos Society. Contrary to Orthodox history, where philanthropy was taken on by both men and women, in the Orthodox American society, spheres seemed to be created with the laywomen taking on the role of charity, while the laymen took on that of administration. The Archbishop saw philanthropy as the prime concern of the tender woman's heart.⁴³ Interestingly, the two spheres of laymen and laywomen appeared to have ripples of conflict.

The appeal of Athenagoras caused mixed reaction from the parish leaders, not that they were opposed to philanthropy, but because some of them felt this could strengthen even more the authority of the clergy at the expense of the laity's authority. Eventually, however, the laymen realized the need; and the Philoptochos movement spread throughout the Archdiocese serving not only the needs of the poor, but in many cases, rescuing even parishes from complete bankruptcies.⁴⁴

As the Priests were to work side by side with their particular female Philoptochos chapter, by serving as President, the all male parish councils took this as a potential threat to their power and ability as administrators. However, one must ask if the tensions were really between the lay parish councils who managed their parish's finances and the clergy who now had an economic influence of another kind at their disposal, or if they were in truth based on the fact that the new economic organization within the parish was to be in the hands of women. Whatever the reason for their fears, they were not unfounded, for parish Philoptochos Societies very quickly became strong economic powers under the spiritual leadership of their parish priests, and in numerous occasions several chapters had actually come to the financial aid of their particular parish councils. There is no question that once all the chapters became united in one sisterhood, each chapter grew in strength and authority. The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society very quickly became a power within the Orthodox Church to be reckoned with.

The Philoptochos organizational structure, which is still the same today, consisted of: (1) the National Board; (2) the District Board; and (3) the Board of each Philoptochos chapter. All component units

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Papaioannou, *From Mars Hill to Manhattan*, p. 123.

of the Philoptochos are under the jurisdiction of the National Board, which is headed by the Archbishop. The aims of the organization as stated in its by-laws are philanthropic, but also religious, cultural and educational:

- (a) To carry on all the philanthropic, charitable and eleemosynary objectives, purposes and obligations of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America.
- (b) To formulate plans and methods to aid the poor, the destitute, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, and all others who may need the help of the Church.
- (c) To voluntarily aid and support scholastic and educational institutions and to establish and create scholarships, prizes and awards for needy and meritorious students of Greek birth or descent.
- (d) To encourage wider religious activity and more active participation in the communal aspects of the Church and to offer spiritual and religious guidance to the younger generation.
- (e) To unite American womanhood of Greek birth and descent so that they may serve the Greek cause in America.⁴⁵

It is interesting to note how even though within the Philoptochos' by-laws the primary focus is that of Orthodox Philanthropy, the secondary focus still remains to uphold the Greek ethnic identity. However, this is not unique to the Greek Orthodox, but to all ethnic Orthodox Churches and is a result of the tightly woven composition of the Church with the specific ethnic society of the motherland.⁴⁶

The scale balancing ethnicity and the Church, however, was slowly tilting toward the Church's favor. The Orthodox social ethos, which is outward in vision by calling each human being to love humankind, through the Philoptochos Society was beginning to emerge in the New World. It must be again here emphasized that the expression of the social ethos which emerged in the Orthodox Church in America was not unique to America nor to twentieth-century Orthodoxy. What the Depression and the vision of Archbishop Athenagoras helped to

⁴⁵Ibid. pp. 124-25.

⁴⁶Constance J. Tarasar, *Orthodox America 1794-1976* (New York, 1975), pp. 183-86.

bring about was a revival in the New World of the Patristic religious thought which has been an intrinsic part of Orthodox theology since the fourth century.

Among the outstanding Greek Fathers who exerted a permanent influence upon Byzantine religious thought, Athanasios, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzenos, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximos the Confessor, Theodore Studites, John of Damascus, and later the Archbishops Nicholas Mystikos, Theophylaktos of Ochrida, and others added new dimensions to the perception and application of philanthropia. Fundamentally all of them expressed the view that philanthropia is one of the paramount attributes of God expressing itself toward His relationship with man, and that as a result man ought to possess the same attributes and to apply it toward his fellow man.⁴⁷

The Church Fathers and Philanthropy

Even from its very beginnings, the philosophy of the Christian Church created a revolutionary shift in the realm of philanthropy "by regarding the poor as the special representatives of the Christian Founder, and thus making the love of Christ rather than the love of man the principle of charity."⁴⁸ By the fourth and fifth centuries, a sound tradition of philanthropic works had been established by the Church, as one can conclude by examining the Canons of the early Church — the collection of Church laws.⁴⁹

In the "golden age" of the Eastern Church, Church legislation provided for the erection of the first philanthropic institutions, such as hospitals, houses for the poor and the elderly, orphanages, and similar establishments.⁵⁰

However, these philanthropic institutions, once established, required maintenance. Each local bishop issued encyclical to all parishes under his jurisdiction urging the local congregations to spare neither labor

⁴⁷ Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Jersey, 1968), pp. 31-32.

⁴⁸ William Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1955), p. 79.

⁴⁹ Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, p. 67.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 69.

nor money in ensuring the upkeep of such institutions.⁵¹ Under the philanthropic care of the priests and deacons, the bishops placed the orphans, the widows, the strangers in want, and others in need.⁵²

The bishops themselves were bound by universal church law to do charitable works, such as visiting prisoners, and protecting the weak, the orphans, the widows, and others. They were instructed to set aside all surpluses of their dioceses for charities, called *ptochica*.⁵³

However, it was understood that the Canons which the early Councils wrote were powerless in influencing charitable works among the faithful. The purpose of these Canons was not to ensure that philanthropic acts were being done, but to give to those acts being done structure. The early Christians living in Byzantium knew that philosophy was an expression of love, and could not be coerced by “cold legalism, which in theory might say much but have little application.”⁵⁴ Philanthropy, in Byzantium, was a daily preoccupation for all believers, whether they be clergy or laity. Nevertheless, the clergy, especially the bishops, realized the value and importance in setting the example for their flocks. Within the Eastern Church’s tradition, there exist an endless number of accounts of clerics — mostly bishops — who have contributed greatly to the cause of philanthropy. However, without a doubt, of the most famous is Saint Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea (370).⁵⁵

Saint Basil was born at Caesarea in Cappadocia about 330 in a family acclaimed for its Christian spirit and for its nobility and wealth.⁵⁶ He was a student of rhetoric, and upon completion of his studies (356) began his career as a rhetorician, which he soon renounced, “to embrace a life entirely devoted to God.”⁵⁷ After receiving the sacrament of baptism, he embarked upon a pilgrimage in order to meet the most famous ascetics. Their lives inspired him greatly. “Upon his return he divided his fortune among the poor and

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid. p. 70.

⁵³Ibid. p. 69.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. 3 (Westminster, 1986), p. 205.

⁵⁶Ibid. p. 204.

⁵⁷Ibid.

went into solitude not far from Neocaesarea on the Iris.⁵⁸ About 364 Basil was persuaded by his bishop Eusebius to become a priest. In 370, Basil took Eusebius' place as bishop of Caesarea.⁵⁹ As such he very quickly won the love and respect of his flock.

[Basil] established hospitals for the sick and victims of contagious diseases, homes for the poor and hospices for travellers and strangers, so that Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian) speaks of an entire 'new city'.⁶⁰

St. Gregory is also known to have described St. Basil "as the only hope for many unfortunate beings," in his diocese when it was befallen by famine.⁶¹ Basil is also described as being the "wealth for poverty, the steward for the wealth, the protector of the widows, and the father of the orphans, the generous friend of the poor (philoptochos), and the friend of the strangers."⁶²

Following in the footsteps of St. Basil the Great, and the other Fathers of the Church, the Philoptochos Society took on one social challenge after another. Throughout the 1930's the main focus was giving relief to those afflicted by the Depression. However, their concerns did not end there, and we begin to see the expansion of the Philoptochos' embrace. In June 1937 Holy Cross Theological School was founded in Pomfret, Connecticut, and the Philoptochos Society contributed generously not only to support the School, but the students who wished to attend.

With the invasion of Mussolini's armies in October, 1940 on the Greek motherland, the Philoptochos became one of the greatest supporters of the Greek War Relief Association, Inc. "Hundreds of thousands of packages were shipped to the people of Greece, including food, clothing, medicine, blankets, hospital equipment and an ambulance bearing the name of the Philoptochos."⁶³ The Greek War Relief continued for several years.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbour, and the entry of the U.S. into the Second World War, the Ladies Philoptochos focused not

⁵⁸Ibid. p. 205.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, p.68.

⁶²Ibid. pp. 68-69.

⁶³National Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, p. 27.

only upon the Greek motherland, but also upon the new American homeland. They devoted long hours to selling War Bonds, became American Red Cross volunteers, and offered hospitality to soldiers on leave. Their important contributions prompted the American government to praise the efforts of the Philoptochos.⁶⁴

However, their work did not stop there. On March 3, 1944, Archbishop Athenagoras announced that the Philoptochos Society had purchased the magnificent 250-acre Jacob Ruppert Estate in Garrison, New York, at a cost of \$55,000.⁶⁵ It was to serve as a Children's Home and Orphanage, a haven for Greek Orthodox Children. The St. Basil Academy was born, and with it the commemoration of a past legacy.

During the first twenty years of its existence, the Ladies Philoptochos Society had dealt with the problems facing the new Greek immigrant, the Depression, and the Second World War. It is amazing that while dealing with such hard historical times they were able to establish the two educational institutions of Holy Cross Theological School, which was later to move to Brookline, Mass., and St. Basil Academy.

However, the greatest achievement was their ever increasing involvement with America and its people. Heeding to Christ's commandment to love all of humankind, the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, while keeping its ethnic identity, could no longer help but reach out beyond its own ethnic world.

Today, Holy Cross School of Theology—a member of B.T.I. (Boston Theological Institute)—and St. Basil Academy are open to both non-Greek and non-Orthodox students. In addition to continually supporting these two educational institutions, the National Philoptochos Society has also become involved with national charities such as Church Women United, Unicef, United Nations, Cooley's Anemia, Research and Emergency Fund for Disaster Aid, in addition to specifically Greek Orthodox charities such as, Patriarchate Fund, Bessie Pappas Children's Charities, Bishop Germanos Charities, Archdiocesan Missions (Foreign and Domestic), St. Photios Shrine, and Pan Orthodox Women to name a few.⁶⁶

As it was the Church that put up the walls in the beginning of the

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶*Philoptochos Society: Diamond Jubilee 1931-1991* (New York, 1991), p. 3.

Greek American experience in order to preserve its identity, so it was again the Church that was slowing dismantling them in order to freely express in action, through the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, that which was at its core: The Christian call to love.



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Reviews

George H. Tavard, *The Church, Community of Salvation* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992). Pp. 264.

This volume on the doctrine of the Church, rooted in careful patristic, biblical, and historical scholarship by a veteran Catholic ecumenist, is an important and readable contribution to the ecclesiological literature. Tavard grounds the developments of the vision of the nature of the Church in a careful exposition of the book. Starting with the Christological base, he develops carefully the pneumatological life of the Church outlining in ironic ways the contributions of East and West, culminating this part of the book with a section on the glory of God as foundation and goal of the Church.

The three subsequent sections, on Tradition, Structures, and Dialogue, develop his syntheses from the inner eucharistic life of the Church outward through its shape and relationships. In discussing tradition he focus on the various images of the Church in the scriptures and in contemporary teaching about its nature. This section is particularly helpful in noting how the Church as mystery and as communion is understood in contemporary Catholic and ecumenical thought. His discussion of how the biblical understanding of the People of God differs from some modern populist movement of democratization. In his section on conciliarity he provides an exposition of teh four creedal marks of the Church, the relationship of local and universal and the role of councils in churcu life. His essay on the "monasticity" of the Church deals both with some of the objections to monasticism and the contribution and role of monasticism in the understanding of the Church.

The section on Structures deals with Ministry, Magisterium and the Church and World. In this he deals with the role of laity as well as the ordained, the variety of tensions and possibilities in the teaching

role of the Church and world. He gives particular emphasis to the role of the local church and its bishop, centered on the Eucharist. It is only within this ecclesiology of communion that the ministry and magisterium of the Bishop of Rome is discussed. In the chapter on the world there is an extended discussion of anthropology, creation and membership in the Church.

The final part of the book is devoted to dialogue: ecumenical, interreligious and the dialogue of the Church with emerging concerns in society. It is here that his ecumenical vision and expertise show through most clearly. In the relationship of the Church and other world religions we have some of the most creative, and possible controversial, proposals of the volume. The last chapter outlines a variety of challenges facing the Church as it moves towards the future, and proposed ways of approaching these developments.

Thomas J. Reese, *A Flock of Shepherds: The National Conference of Catholic Bishops* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1992). Pp. 406.

When bishops come together in synod, council or conference, their primary calling is to celebrate the eucharistic unity of Christ's Church and to proclaim the orthodox Apostolic Faith. The Church of the East has been more likely to rely on the synodical nature of the Church for its witness and communion than the Roman Catholic Church. Among the western churches, the Anglican and Protestant communions may well have more in common with the synodical life and the relationships of laity and clergy in governance practiced in Orthodoxy than does Roman Catholicism. However, since the renewal of the Second Vatican Council, collegiality, conciliarity, and participation have become priorities in Roman Catholic ecclesiology as well.

One among the multitude of renewed structures of ecclesial communion that celebrate the eucharistic unity of the Church and wider participation in its decision making, are national episcopal conferences. While these are not yet synodical or conciliar bodies in the full theological or canonical sense, they do witness to the collegial and conciliar character of a renewed Roman Catholicism. This sort sociological study of the twenty five year history of the US Episcopal Conference is an important contribution to understanding American church life and the renewal of worldwide Catholicism. This is not a theological study, nor does it engage or even disclose the details of



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is not found in the liturgical calendar, until recently; and there is no *akolouthia* in his honor. Azkoul draws the conclusion that Augustine did not have a serious impact on Orthodox theology and life.

In researching the patristic and Byzantine sources, the author of this book clearly sets forth that the Fathers of both East and West rejected Augustine's world view based on his theories of predestination, original sin, and irresistible grace. He treats those issues as well as the theological issues in a most critical way showing that Augustine perverted the Orthodox faith in the West. The greatest mistake that Augustine made was that Plotinos was the center of his theological-philosophical system. That is, "Augustine borrowed the principle (of the *Enneads*) to develop his Christian version of Greek philosophy" (p. 129).

Michael Azkoul in this well-researched book has shown that "historically, Augustine has no cult in Orthodoxy;" and points out that "he has been condemned by indifference" (p. 271).

My personal opinion, supported by my research, is that although Augustine fell into several errors and taught heretical views before the Church took a stand on these doctrines, this does not mean that his name should be deleted or removed from the list of saints. This view is supported by such saints and prominent churchmen in the Orthodox Church as Saint Photios the Great, Saint Gennadios Scholarios, Saint Nikodemos, and Saint Nektarios who insisted on including Augustine's name on the list of Orthodox saints. The research and analysis of the works and doctrines of Augustine must continue to be done by Orthodox theologians to bring about a balanced and right Orthodox view of this great Western theologian-philosopher.

Congratulations are due to the author whose book is a critical response to the teachings of Augustine by an Orthodox theologian and deserves the attention of all theologians, both Eastern and Western. Azkoul's theological acumen and his rich research into the sources clarifies and articulates the issues that separate East and West.

George C. Papademetriou
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Graham Gould. *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. Pp. 8 + 202.

The *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the collection of sayings, dialogues and short narratives which preserve the words of the fourth and fifth century Egyptian monks, is a document of considerable interest in the history of Christian spirituality. The importance of the *Apophthegmata* especially as a source of our knowledge of early Christian monasticism is also widely acknowledged.

This book, based on the author's doctoral thesis in the University of Cambridge, is a study of the Life and the thought of the Desert Fathers in the *Apophthegmata*. 'Personal relationships,' as a factor in the monastic life, is the general theme that is examined in the book. The author explores a series of questions: How important are relationships to the Desert Fathers? What factors disrupt the proper conduct of relationships within the community, and how are they to be overcome? What are the responsibilities of both teachers and disciples in ensuring the effectiveness of their relationship?

The discovery of the Desert Fathers' answers to these questions occupies the first four chapters of the book: The *Text* and the *Community*; *The Abba and his Disciple*; *The Monk and his Neighbour*; *The Problems of Anger and Judgement*. The final two chapters, *Solitude and Interaction; Relationships and Prayer*, address questions more directly concerned with the nature of the Desert Fathers' life considered in its totality, both in its ideals and its practical realization. Is the monastic life essentially one of solitude or of interaction, of personal goals or of openness towards others, or is it possible to combine these apparently conflicting views? How does a monk's relationship with his neighbour affect his relationship with God and his life of prayer?

The author challenges some of Peter Brown's arguments at this field, such as the view that the Desert Fathers' concerns are a response to the problems which they experienced in non-monastic society and that their positions on anger and related problems are a clear reflection of the frictions of Egyptian village life.

He eventually shows, that the teaching of the Desert Fathers on the monastic life was profoundly concerned not only with such subjects as asceticism, prayer, and temptation, or with problems such as the place of monasticism in the wider Church and society, but also with the question of monastic community, or 'personal relationships' within the monastic life. In chapters 5 and 6 reasons are given for believing that in the life of the majority of monks a balance between solitary and common life could be struck—for example through the

practice of hospitality—even by those who were most concerned to emphasize the importance of prayer and hesychia.

What comes at the end as the overall conclusion, is that the Desert Fathers saw community as an integral part of their monastic ideal and rarely regarded solitude as a way of life to be pursued at the expense of community.

The author has a very good command of primary and secondary sources. Thus, the book is well documented, including a helpful bibliography and index.

I recommend without reservation the addition of this book to the resources for studying the life and the theology of the Desert Fathers. It is a part of a very interesting series *The Oxford Early Christian Studies*, which includes scholarly volumes on the thought and history of the early Christian centuries. Covering a wide range of Greek, Latin and Oriental sources, the books of the series are of great interest to theologians, ancient historians, and specialists in the classical and Jewish words.

Christos B. Christakis
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Tony Campolo, *How to Rescue the World Without Worshiping Nature* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992). Pp. 213.

How to Rescue the World Without Worshiping Nature is an insightful book written by Dr. Tony Campolo, the noted best-selling author, speaker, professor of sociology at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pennsylvania and director of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education. The volume is divided into 14 chapters which generally examine: (1) the origin of the environmental crises, (2) an analysis of the Church's failure to address it, (3) a "theology" of Christian environmental responsibility and finally, (4) a number of practical ways that the contemporary Church can involve itself in, what the author calls, "creation-care." A special section is also dedicated to the theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church and its implications on the contemporary environmental debate.

Underscoring the concerns of numerous Christian thinkers, Tony Campolo wrote his book to "add," as he insists, his voice to an increasing chorus which declares that "rescuing the environment...and ending the careless selfish lifestyle that brought us to this impen-



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The Development of a Theologian according to Saint Gregory the Theologian

DANIEL M. ROGICH

LET US ASSEMBLE, O GOD-THINKERS,
Let us celebrate with spiritual praise the chief of hierarchs
and the pride of patriarchs,
The interpreter of the dogmas and thoughts of Christ;
Let us honor him whom God exalted with a heavenly mind,
 saying:
Rejoice, O fountain of theology and river of wisdom, the well of
divine contemplation,
Rejoice, O brilliant star, since you enlightened the entire
world with your dogmas,
Rejoice, O great and valiant battler of impiety and persecution,
O most wise Gregory the Theologian;
Do not cease to pray to Christ God for the faithful who forever
desire to celebrate your divinely virtuous and venerable
 memory.
(Hymn of Vespers)

In celebrating the sixteen-hundredth anniversary of the repose of Saint Gregory the Theologian (390-1990), we are immediately inundated by a plethora of honorary titles attached to his legacy. By reviewing the liturgical poetry exalting him,¹ we discover many of these eoritic proclamations: virtuous ascetic, exalted contemplative,

¹In the Menaion, the liturgical texts of the feastdays in honor of Gregory the Theologian are located under January 25th and 30th, the latter being the feastday of the Three Hierarchs.

brilliant orator, mystic poet, fierce apologist, holy bishop and divine theologian. Yet of all the titles given him by the Orthodox Church, the latter one, that of ὁ Θεολόγος, remains by far the most unique and magnificatory; for as is well-known, only the evangelist John and later Symeon have received such a distinction.² The Orthodox Church calls him “the Theologian” primarily because of his brilliance in explaining the Holy Trinity, as especially his *Five Theological Orations* have become the standard of Nicene Orthodoxy.³

Yet how did Gregory himself develop into “the Theologian”? What was his method and personal hermeneutic of theology? What was his own definition of a theologian?; and what was his contribution in the area of the development of a theologian? We are able to pose these questions partly because Gregory left us writings on the nature of theology and character of a theologian—particularly his first two *Theological Orations*;⁴ besides, liturgical veneration has never been taken lightly in Orthodox theology and Christian life. Calling him ὁ Θεολόγος is quite important in Eastern Christian thought—as I will point out—and hence by no means can this claim be classified as liturgical hyperbole.⁵ This essay then will put forth how Saint Gregory developed, in the course of his life, into a theologian. This will be explained from the vantage point of what I believe were

² In the Menaion, the liturgical texts of the feastdays in honor of John the Theologian are found under May 8th and September 26th, and those of Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) are found on March 12th.

³ Text: *The Five Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzos*, ed. A.J. Mason, *Cambridge Patristics Texts* 1 (Cambridge 1899); see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 1: *The Emergence of Catholic Tradition* (Chicago and London, 1971), pp. 218-24; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York, 1974), pp. 180-83; Frances Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 115.

⁴ *Orat.* 27, 28.

⁵ See Alexander Schmemann, *Great Lent* (Crestwood, NY., 1974), p. 79f. The liturgical poetry used in communal worship in the Orthodox Church has always been considered a source of theology for Eastern Christian theologians. Titles, proclamations or aspects of a Saint’s life being magnified in liturgical worship are viewed as both necessary and proper to the entire theological enterprise. This fact reveals that Eastern Christian Tradition has not made a great distinction between “academic or professional” theology on the one hand and the “official” theology of the Church on the other. A more holistic approach which stresses the overall “experience” of the Church seems to be the one opted for in the East. Thus, to the words of Vladimir Lossky that “in a certain sense all theology is mystical,” one can add that “all theology is liturgical and holistic.” See *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY., 1976), p. 7; see note 39 below concerning the consultation of the experiences of the saints as proper to the method of theology.

the three main areas of tension and concern is his life: 1) Christianity and contemporary culture; 2) the active and contemplative life; and 3) theology and pastoring. By abstracting from his life and writings,⁶ I will also have in mind what Saint Gregory has to say to us today. I will show that these tensions are perennial and vital ones, and that Gregory's grappling with these concerns, and to a large extent integrating them, grants us a clear vision of the development of an Orthodox theologian.

Christianity and Contemporary Culture

Gregory came from a well-established Christian family. His father Gregory the elder, a recent convert, won by his Christian wife, became the bishop of Nazianzos. His close friends, the brothers Basil, Gregory and Peter (later bishops as well), whose grandparents had been martyrs, greatly influenced him in the faith. As a result, he nowhere speaks of a great psychological stimulus of conversion to the faith. He speaks rather "with the conviction of a faith into which (he) was born, a faith whose images, expressions, vocabulary and attitudes were second nature to him."⁷ Yet his experience was not provincial and sectarian. Belonging to the higher class of Cappadocia, Gregory was afforded a first-rate classical education. After studying with his brother Kaisarios in the Christian learning centers of Palestinian Caesarea and Alexandria—both famous for their connection to Origen—Gregory settled in Athens, joining Basil in the pursuit of literature, philosophy and rhetoric. He spent most of his twenties there, becoming a fine rhetor and philosopher. It was not until later, around 357, that he reluctantly followed Basil back to Cappadocia, to Basil's retreat in Pontos, in order to take up the ascetic and contemplative life. He was then baptised, which at this time implied a commitment to shun worldly ambitions.

Yet his withdrawal from the world did not include an abandonment of classical education. Of all the Cappadocian fathers, Gregory seems to have best integrated and realized accord between Hellenism and Christianity.⁸ Modern studies show that Gregory was substantially

⁶ The major reason the life of Gregory the Theologian is well-known is because of the fact that the Cappadocian fathers left valuable collections of correspondence. For Gregory's letters, see P. Gallay, *Lettres* (2 vols., Budé, Paris, 1964, 1967); Briefe, GCS 1969; *Lettres théologiques*, SC 208, 1974; also several are in Vol. 5 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1975).

⁷ F. Young, *From Nicaea*, p. 93.

⁸ E. Fleury, *Hellénisme et Christianisme. S. Gregoire de Nazianze et son temps* (Paris, 1930), p. 99.

familiar with a wide range of literature which he sublimated into his ecclesiastical works.⁹ In spite of the current polemic versus literature and philosophy, he could not disclaim his classical heritage. In his panegyrics on Kaisarios, Athanasios and Basil,¹⁰ he emphasizes their comprehensive education and status as men of culture of the times. Gregory concedes that Christianity owed much to "external wisdom," since he believed that classical culture was a treasured heritage and indeed the foundation of human life. Pagan philosophy was only dangerous because it was often superfluous in discourse and inundated with human vanities. Philosophy christianized, however, put in proper relationship the human λόγοι to the divine Λόγος, producing practical virtue and contemplation, and so leading to truth.¹¹ He even criticized Christians who disdained (secular) education and literature:

It must be admitted by people of sense, that our first advantage is education, and not only our noble form ($\tauὴν εὐγενεστέραν$) of it, which disregards rhetorical ornaments and glory, and holds to salvation and beauty in the objects of our contemplation; but even that external culture ($\deltaλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἔξωθεν$) which many Christians ill-judgingly abhor as treacherous and dangerous, keeping us far from God. We should not neglect the heavens and earth, air and all such things, because some have improperly seized upon them, and honor God's works instead of God; but we must reap what advantage we can from them for our life and enjoyment, while avoiding their dangers, and not raise creation, as fools do, in revolt against the Creator, . . . but, as the divine Apostle says, bring into captivity every thought to Christ (2 Cor 10.5) . . . So from secular literature we have received principles of inquiry and speculation, . . . which have aided our religion ($θεοσέβειαν$), by our perception of the contrast between what is worse and what is better, and

⁹ Gregory alluded to passages in Homer, Hesiod, Theognis, Solon, Simonides, Pindar, the tragedians, Aristophanes, Kallimachos, Herodotos, Thukydides, Plutarch, Demosthenes, Lysias, Isokrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinos, and others in his ecclesiastical writings. See D. Amand, *Fatalisme et liberté dans l'antiquité grèque* (Louvain, 1945).

¹⁰ *Orat.* 7.21, 43.

¹¹ *Orat.* 25; see also J. Coman, "Hellénisme et Christianisme dans le 25e discours de saint Grégoire de Nazianze," *StudPatr.*, 14 (1976), 290-301.

by gaining strength for our doctrine from the weakness in theirs. We must not then dishonor education because some do so, but consider them to be rather boorish and uneducated, who desire all to be as they, hiding and escaping in their lack of culture.¹²

Gregory's *Orations* are examples of this "noble form" of integrated contemporary rhetoric, and his *Poems* reveal reliance on the classicism of the past, even though his attempt to create a parallel Christian poetry was hindered by the traditional literary form.¹³ Gregory was also the first Greek author to compile an anthology of his own letters, also suggesting to a young disciple that epistolary compositions should be clear, short and precise, citing Basil's correspondence as models of letter writing. The majority of these letters are personal and biographical in nature and manifest this tension between "Jerusalem and Athens" in the course of his life.¹⁴

This conflict in Gregory's life was most apparent in his *Orations against Julian*.¹⁵ Composed after Julian's death, these writings were directed against Julian's attempt to deny education to Christians and to plead the case that *λόγοι* ("words")—literature, culture, argument—do not belong to paganism. If indeed, as Julian proposed, that nothing beyond the Orthodox faith was required of Christians—worldly wisdom being "foolishness to God" and literature being incompatible with scripture—then it would be unnecessary for Christians to be professional teachers of rhetoric. Gregory's insistence that no race had the exclusive claim to culture, and that Greek language, mathematics, poetry, etc., should be available as intellectual tools for the education of theologians and the development of apologetic argument helped in not depriving the Church of educated leaders in the centuries to come. Even though he criticized Gregory of Nyssa for taking up the profession of rhetor, he nonetheless knew and proposed that classical "Attic" education could serve as an ἀριθῆς ὅπλον ("weapon of virtue")¹⁶ as well as an auxiliary to Christian

¹²Orat. 43.11

¹³D. Sykes, "The Poemata Arcana of St. Gregory Nazianzen," JTS, 21 (1970), 32-42.

¹⁴Many of the 244 letters which survive reveal this tension, as do the vast majority of his poems; see J. Quasten, *Patrology* 3, p. 247.

¹⁵Orat. 4, 5.

¹⁶Ibid. 4. 30.

doctrine, i.e., thereby establishing a method of theology in which the integration and perichoresis of Christianity and contemporary culture would become one of the primacy tasks in the development of a theologian.

Without being imprisoned in the Hellenic philosophical systems—the Platonic, Aristotelian or neo-Platonic—Gregory, and the other Cappadocian fathers, was able to use Greek concepts and terminology in making the Christian Gospel relevant to a world in which it appeared and in which it had to expand. The Trinitarian terminology of Gregory of Nazianzos—and its later usage in the Chalcedonian and post-Calcedonian periods—clearly shows that such concepts as φύσις, οὐσία, and ὑπόστασις “acquire an entirely new meaning when used out of the context of the Platonic or Aristotelian systems in which they were born.”¹⁷ These new meanings imply an organic interplay between Christianity and contemporary culture—with new personalistic and therefore non-Hellenic metaphysical presuppositions—something which would have been entirely different had Gregory’s audience not been Greek. Thus, “from Gregory of Nazianzos in the fourth century to Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth, the representatives of the Orthodox tradition all express their conviction that heresies are based upon the uncritical absorption of pagan Greek philosophy into Christian thought.”¹⁸

¹⁷J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 24.

¹⁸Ibid. p. 25; Gregory’s pioneering efforts in this type of approach to theology aided in the development of such theologians as Maximos the Confessor, John of Damascus and later Gregory Palamas, who were all schooled in classical literature and “used” this learning to profess Orthodox Christianity to their contemporaries. Perhaps this successful integration of these tensions “subconsciously” aided the Church in the sixth century, at the Council of Constantinople (553), offering a method of deciding what were “the limits of piety” (*ὅρος πίστεως*) regarding Origen’s Platonic influences in the doctrine of creation. During that same century, Justinian’s *Sixth Novella*, stressing the “symphonia” between “things divine” and “human affairs”—a practical theory based upon the incarnation which united the divine and human natures—was in congruence with Gregory’s early convictions and method of theology. This same conflict, resurfacing in the ninth century with the renaissance of ancient philosophy, producing such humanists as Michael Psellos, Arethas and later John Italos, who attempted a new synthesis between Platonism and Christianity, was resolved by the anathemas of the Synod of 1076-77 which repeated Gregory’s thesis that “Hellenic studies” could be undertaken for instruction only, and not for developing an entire theological system (Anath. 7). Finally, the entire Palamite debate in the fourteenth century cannot be fully appreciated or properly understood without recognizing the pioneering attempt on the part of Gregory of Constantinople to integrate “the Greek mind and the Christian Gospel.”

What then do Gregory's efforts to resolve the tension between Christianity and contemporary culture say to us today, particularly to those Orthodox theologians living in the West? Western Christian theologians—primarily Roman Catholics—having abandoned the rationalist formulae of scholasticism, are now seeking, by the impetus of Vatican II, a new presentation of the Faith based upon the human sciences.¹⁹ For the Orthodox Christian theologian—whose entire theological tradition has always been based upon such an approach—this means that theology cannot operate in a cultural vacuum. The theologian cannot develop when hermetically sealed off from the world. Yet there will always be the danger of the “Origenistic complex” which reduces theology to a given “situation” or “age,” with an overemphasis on “relevance,” making of the theologian a type of Jungian psycho-philosopher concerned with only the passing “religious needs” of modern humankind. It is one thing to depend upon the world and another to be related to it. If the first attitude, the acceptance of the world as the sole criterion of theology, is to be rejected, then the second, the soteriologically motivated approach concerned with the conversion of the world (and its culture), must become the true *raison d'être* of theology. In this sense, one of the developmental tasks of the theologian is to discern and integrate these modern needs, to become aware of what the Church (and the faith) expects from him. This is precisely one of Gregory the Theologian's con-

¹⁹Dumitru Staniloae, *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, NY., 1980), p. 214f; It has only been since World War II that the Roman Catholic Church has “taken another route” in presenting their tradition to the (secular) world. With Vatican II’s reversal of the 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis*, now the human sciences are to be fully employed to explain the faith. As I explained in note 18, this approach seems to have been the Eastern Christian method “from the beginning.” Might I add that the Palamite synthesis—the integration of the Orthodox dogmatic tradition with Eastern Christian spirituality, resulting in explaining the Trinity more fully, i.e., particularly the definition of grace (*έπερφα*)—has aided many Roman Catholic theologians in their search for a better format of explaining the faith than that of the manner of scholasticism. See, for example, William M. Thompson, *Fire and Light: The Saints and Theology* (New York, 1985), where he credits Palamas and also proposes a rediscovery of theology from this more holistic and experiential perspective. The context of Aristotelian “physicalism”—in the form of Thomas Aquinas—is now being replaced with modern phenomenological “personalism,” resulting in a more positive, existential and holistic approach to theology on the part of Western Christian theologians. The major caution here—which can also be gleaned from Gregory the Theologian’s development into a theologian—is the avoidance of once again subjugating the faith of the Church to the relative categories found in socio-anthropological studies.

tributions to the development of a theologian—a keen sense of what the needs of the Church around which one is to respond and organize his theological work.

The Active and Contemplative Life

As mentioned, when Gregory was around twenty-seven years old (ca. 357), he decided to join Basil at his retreat in Pontos in order to arduously pursue the ascetic and contemplative life. For the next four years prior to his ordination on Christmas of 361, notwithstanding the occasional trips home to support his aging parents, Gregory's time was spent with Basil "holding pure communion with God being illumined by the rays of the Spirit, without anything earthly or clouded to bar the divine light, and so desiring to reach the source of our effulgence and to stay all desires and aspirations."²⁰ He was strongly attracted at this time to the images of Elijah and John the Baptist, also seeing in Basil one who seemed "covered with clouds, like the wise men of the Old Testament."²¹ Gregory was also overpowered by his "love for divine books and the light of the Spirit, which is acquired by studying the word of God, as such studies are impossible in the silence of the desert."²² Basil and he compiled the *Philokalia*, and anthology of quotes from Origen, and Gregory probably also helped his friend in formulating his *Rules* for monastic communities.²³

²⁰See these quotes of Georges Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century*, Vol. 7 of *The Collected Works*, ed. Richard Haugh (Belmont, Ma., 1987), p. 110. This contemplative desire is repeated elsewhere in Gregory's writings; compare, for example, *Orat. 2.7*: "For nothing seems to me so desirable as to close the doors of my senses, and, escaping from the flesh and the world, collected within myself, having no further connection than was absolutely necessary with human affairs, and speaking to myself and to God, to live superior to visible things, ever preserving in myself the divine impressions pure and unmixed with erring tokens of this lower world."

²¹Ibid.; It should be noted that although Gregory seemed ambivalent concerning the ideal, joking in letters to Basil about his over enthusiasm—especially in Ep. 4, 5, 6—nonetheless, Basil's wholehearted immersion in the monastic life was quite influential on Gregory, especially when Gregory was forced out of the life of withdrawal into ecclesiastical service.

²²Ibid.

²³Saint Basil, Ep. 2, relays to Gregory his ideas on monasticism. Also, for the Origenite *Philokalia*, see E. Junod, "Remarques sur la composition de la *Philocalia d'Origène* par Basile de Césarée et Grégoire de Nazianze," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse*, 52 (1972), 149-56.

These activities in Pontos were vital to Gregory's development as a theologian. His personal experiences there became the basis of the definition of a theologian he offered later in his *First Theological Oration*:

Not to everyone, my friends, does it belong to philosophize on God ($\tauὸ περὶ Θιοῦ φιλοσοπηεῖν$) . . . because it is permitted only to those who have been examined, and are passed masters in meditation, and who have been previously purified in soul and body, or at least are being purified. For the impure to touch the pure is, we say safely say, not safe, just as it is unsafe to fix weak eyes upon the sun's rays. And what is the permitted occasion? It is when we are free from all external defilement or disturbance, and when that which rules within us is not confused with vexations of erring images . . . And who are the permitted persons? They to whom the subject is of real concern, and not they who make it a matter of pleasant gossip, like any other thing, such as the races, or the theater, or a concert, or a dinner, or still lower employments.²⁴

A theologian, "who philosophizes on God," is required then to be "pure," and to only "consort with serious people"²⁵ who "philosophize on subjects within our reach and to such an extent as the mental power and grasp of our audience may extend."²⁶ Gregory's first criticism of his theological opponents was that they "wantonly misuse words" and "make their theology a defence for their own gods and passions"²⁷ An Orthodox theologian had to develop within himself a keen sense of moderation and the awareness that "words proper to God" ($\thetaεοπρεπεῖς λόγοι$) can only be obtained

²⁴Orat. 27, 3.

²⁵Ibid. 1.

²⁶Ibid. 4.

²⁷Ibid. 6. Gregory's opponents here are the Eunomians; also, Basil felt the same way in his criticism of Apollinarios; see Ep. 129.1 and Ep. 263.4, where he writes the following on Apollinarios' quickness for debate and lack of moderation: "Next comes Apollinarios, who is no less a cause of sorrow to the churches. With his facility of writing, and a tongue ready to argue on any subject, he has filled the world with his works, in disregard of the advice of him who said, 'Beware of making many books' (Ecc. 12.12). In their multitude there are certainly many errors. How is it possible to avoid sin in a multitude of words?"

by taking up the ascetic life: “to look to ourselves and polish our theological self to beauty like a statue.”²⁸

The goal then of the ascetic life is θεωρία, the contemplation of things divine, as asceticism prepares one “to be a spectator of things invisible, a hearer of things unspeakable, one who has ascended like Elias, and like Moses has been deemed worthy of the vision of God (τὴν θεωρίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ), and like Paul has been taken up into heaven.”²⁹ This experiential context of taking up the ascetic and contemplative life became for Gregory the foundation for the entire theological enterprise—becoming his own personal hermeneutic of theology—as well as the context for his teaching on the apophatic way of knowing and experiencing God the Holy Trinity. It became the experiential method and prerequisite for the development of a theologian, as well as the criterion for deciding what was heresy and who was incapable of theological endeavors. The Arians, Gregory believed, were too rational, as their cold technicality of logical argumentation did not square with his apophatic “experience of awe and mystery found in the universe, in ascetic contemplation, in the liturgy and in scripture.”³⁰

It was this love of contemplation which eventually lead Gregory to another conflict in his life: the tension between withdrawal for contemplation and the active life of duty to the community in ecclesiastical service. The fourth century was one of turmoil in this regard. The impact of the monastic movement intensified this conflict of ideals. Gregory’s personality traits of sensitivity, exuberance, indecisiveness and introspection made him an easy prey for such a conflict. This tension was readily visible in other ecclesiastical leaders of this century as well. For example, Basil suffered during his episcopacy in trying to balance the two; and Gregory of Nyssa’s political jockeying is quite revelatory when reviewed from the background of his “mystical orientation.” And decades later, John Chrysostom, an ascetic at heart, was unable to hold down the position of Patriarch

²⁸Ibid. 7.

²⁹Ibid. 9.

³⁰F. Young, *From Nicaea*, p. 114; for his criticisms of the Eunomians, see Orat. 28, 29 and 45. In Orat. 28.2, Gregory says this concerning those incapable of becoming a theologian: “But if any is an evil and savage beast, and altogether incapable of contemplation and theology, let him not hurtfully and malignantly lurk in his den among the woods, to catch hold of some dogma or saying by a sudden spring, and to tear sound doctrine to pieces by his misrepresentations.”

of Constantinople due to these conflicting ideals. It certainly can be argued that Gregory of Constantinople did not realize total accord in his life concerning these ideals: the flight after his ordination in 361 along with his frustrated episcopal life both in Sasima (ca.372) and in Constantinople (380) attest to this indecisiveness and lack of success; nevertheless, his struggles did offer solutions. The *Apology for the Flight to Pontos* and *Farewell Oration* in Constantinople outlined the necessary qualities for ordination to the priesthood and character of a bishop, proposing that sincere and committed ecclesiastical service could be considered on equal footing with one's desire for contemplation. Gregory thesis proposed the balance between and integration of withdrawal and involvement as a proper goal for all theologians and servants of the Church.³¹

Later in life, Gregory seems to have discovered a successful integration of these ideals in one of his contemporaries. His *Panegyric on Athanasios*, written around 380, after Gregory came to Constantinople, grants us an image of one who realized agreement between contemplation and service. In this eulogy, Greogry first insists that deification ($\theta\acute{e}wsi\acute{s}$) is the goal of Christian life, resulting from contemplation “in rising superior to the dualism in matter, through the unity which is perceived in the Trinity.”³² He then cites the examples of the Old Testamental figures of Moses, Jacob and Elijah who “were concerned with Christ’s incarnation” as well as the evangelist John, the other disciples and early martyrs, who were both rich in contemplation as well as people of action. He eulogizes that Athanasios surpassed them all both in action and in contemplation, by the integration of the two: “he (Athanasios) made one perfect form of virtue out of all ($\acute{\epsilon}\omega \acute{d}\rho\acute{e}t\eta\acute{s} \acute{e}l\acute{d}\acute{o}s \acute{e}k \acute{p}\acute{a}n\acute{t}\acute{w}\acute{o}n \acute{d}\acute{p}\acute{t}\acute{p}\acute{h}\acute{r}\acute{i}\acute{b}\acute{w}\acute{a}\acute{s}\acute{a}\acute{t}\acute{o}$), excelling in action men of intellectual capacity, and in intellect men of action; or if you will, surpassing in intellect men renowned for intellect, in action those of the greatest active power.”³³ Athanasios accomplished this “perfect form of virtue” by properly distinguishing the two—service and contemplation—and by achieving in both and considering “ecclesiastical service” as an integral element of the ascetic life which prepares one for $\theta\acute{e}wri\acute{a}$ or contemplation: “he [Athanasios] grew rich in contemplation, rich in splendor of life,

³¹Orat. 2.42.

³²Orat. 21.2.

³³Ibid. 4.

combining them in a wondrous way by that golden bond which few can weave; using life as the guide of contemplation, contemplation as the seal of life.”³⁴

This teaching of Saint Gregory was both traditional and innovative. It continued the well-known distinctions of the personal spiritual path: the active and contemplative life, as these subdivisions can be found in such writers as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Dionysios the Areopagite, Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrios of Pontos.³⁵ At the same time this teaching was unique in regards to the topic we are discussing, i.e., the method of theology and development of a theologian. In a very forceful manner, Gregory upholds this integration as a necessary “personal plan” and task in the development of a theologian. Every theologian must be an “integrated person,” one who is active in the Church and in the world and at the same time who “uses” this activity—ascesis—as a preparatory means for contemplation. In this sense, there is no dichotomy between the active and contemplative life, between the calling to be either a theologian or an ecclesiastical leader. For Gregory, theology properly defined is the knowledge of the mystery of the Holy Trinity as revealed to the Church; yet, this knowledge is known as an entrance into union with God, which means the attainment of deification. To become “partakers of divine nature” (*θείας χοινωνοὶ φύσεως*), as Saint Peter says, is then a mystical knowledge appealing to experience (*πείρα*), which presupposes and results in an inexhaustive and continual progres-

³⁴Ibid. 6.

³⁵Clement calls the active life *πρακτική*, and subdivides the contemplative life into two stages: “natural contemplation” (*φυσική*) and the “vision of God” (*θεωρία* or *θεολογία* or *γνῶσις*). Origen speaks of this same three-fold subdivision as “ethics,” “physics,” and “enoptics”; and he affiliates each stage with a book of scripture: “ethics” with Proverbs, “physics” with Ecclesiastes and “enoptics” with the Song of Songs. In Dionysios the Areopagite the terms are “purification,” “illumination” and “union.” This terminology and scheme were brought to the West by the Spanish mystic, John of the Cross (1542-1591), and by the unknown British author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Gregory of Nyssa employs this format in his mystical writings, as he speaks of “light,” “cloud” and “darkness.” Evagrios of Pontos returns to Origen’s rendition, which was imported to the West by John Cassian (360-435). Also, to note, these categories were continued after the era of Gregory the Theologian: Maximos the Confessor also used Origen’s scheme and Gregory Palamas adhered to this Byzantine tradition, as it can be detected in his *Capita physica, theologica, moralia et practica*. And, of course, these understandings were employed by the Balkan Orthodox—Bulgarians, Serbians, Romanians—as well as by the Russians. For an excellent discussion on these stages, see Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY., 1980), 140-178.

sion of change—"from glory to glory"—in human beings, a theosis of evermore intimate union with the Holy Trinity. The equation, theology = knowledge = union = theosis = change from glory to glory capsulizes then the object, definition, method, and developmental nature of theology and the theologian in the thought of Gregory the Theologian.³⁶

What then do Gregory's efforts to resolve the tension between the active and contemplative life reveal to us today? Perhaps we can question our fellow Roman Catholic theologians concerning their traditional definition of the active and contemplative life with regard to the understanding and place of the theologian in the Church. In Western Christian literature, the active and contemplative life are often placed at opposite ends of the spiritual spectrum, in which the active life "denotes members of religious orders engaged in teaching, preaching or social work, whereas the contemplative life refers to religious such as the Carthusians, who live in enclosure."³⁷ The interpretation of Luke 10.38-42, as pertaining to the spiritual life, has often been the model for this dichotomy and negative juxtaposition: Martha is the symbol of the active "wordly religious" life, while Mary represents the higher more perfect contemplative life. William Johnston, an expert in Roman Catholic and other Western Christian spiritual theology, says that this still is the dominant and accepted position as he asserts that it is based upon the thought of Clement, Origen and Augustine. He "claims that the mystical masterpiece *The Cloud of Unknowing* bases its distinctions between those called to perfection (=the Mary types) and those called to salvation (=the Martha types) on just such an interpretation."³⁸ Thus the question can be asked: Doesn't this dichotomy—the "active" versus "contemplative," "spiritual" versus "material," "sacred" versus "profane," "supernatural" versus "natural"—conceive theology in opposition to mysticism and Christian personal experience in general,

³⁶V. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 67; see Daniel Rogich, "Homily 34 of Saint Gregory Palamas," *GOTR*, 33 (1988), 138.

³⁷K. Ware, "Ways of Prayer and Contemplation: Eastern," *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, eds. B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff (New York, 1987), p. 398.

³⁸W. Johnston, *The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion* (New York, 1978), p. 25. For an alternative view to this traditional Western Christian interpretation, see the Roman Catholic scholar William M. Thompson, *The Jesus Debate: A Survey and Synthesis* (New York, 1985), p. 9.

as well as create an unnecessary dialect between the theologian and the mystic, i.e., an elitist position which disregards the consultation of the experiences of the saints as a proper theological source in the development of a theologian.³⁹

Perhaps Gregory's definition of the spiritual life as an integrated whole in which the active and contemplative life are envisioned as two deepening, non-successive and interpenetrating levels can grant a corrective to this dialectical syndrome by presenting theology and the definition of a theologian in a more holistic and experiential manner, i.e., whereby theology is not conceived as the sum of propositions, data or legalistic mandates but rather is based upon the experiential (*πειρακώς*) on the participatory (*μετεχουκώς*), on that dynamic (*δυναμικώς*) and open-ended relationship between God and human beings, a relationship which defines the theologian as a person of "spiritual action" (*νοερὰ πράξις* who is in a never-ending process of communion and union in the mystery of the Holy Trinity in the Church. This is another important contribution of Gregory the Theologian to the development of a theologian: where theology is not opposed to mysticism, defining the theologian as a person of experience, who has as his supreme developmental goal that perichorectical life—deified life with God.

Theology and Pastoring

The last major event in the life of Gregory the Theologian was his selection as Archbishop of Constantinople in 380. The facts that this appointment was questioned on canonical grounds and Gregory's own protests against the installation were overshadowed by his overall success as both a theologian and pastor in Constantinople.⁴⁰ The capital city was in turmoil at this time due to the religious differences caused by the vacillating courtiers who followed the creed of the current emperor; most of the churches had been in the hands of the Arians for over fifty years. This unruly situation set the stage for the arrival

³⁹At the 1927 Faith and Order conference in Lausanne, the Serbian Orthodox bishop Nikolai Velimirovich made these comments on the consultation of the experiences of the saints: "All that we have said about the great Christian Mysteries is not an opinion . . . but it is the repeated experience of the Apostles in the ancient days up to our own times. For the Church lives not on opinion, but on the experience of the saints, as in the beginning so in our days. The opinions of intellectual persons may be wonderfully clever and yet be false, whereas the experience of the saints is always true. It is God the Lord who is true himself to his saints."

⁴⁰Orat. 33; *Carmen de vita sua* 592f.

of Gregory, as he found himself in the unenviable position of being called upon to rally the tiny community of faithful Nicene Christians to make fully known Nicene Orthodoxy. And in fact Gregory was a resounding success. His brilliant oratory attracted crowds to the chapel of the Anastasis where he delivered his *Five Theological Orations* with such clarity and ease of expression that it brought dissension in the enemy Arian camp. He was persecuted for his oratory, but the Nicene forces grew steadily. As a result, Emperor Theodosios turned against the Arians and placed Gregory in the cathedral as the future archbishop.

Gregory's ability to communicate the theological position of Trinitarian Orthodoxy to this city congregation stemmed from the fact that he was now ready and able, in his mature years, to fully integrate preaching with theology. For him, theology was imbued with a necessary pastoral dimension, i.e., "that essential link between the Tradition of the Church and real life, to assure the acceptance of the faith by the faithful."⁴¹ It is perhaps for this reason more than any other that he received the title of ὁ θεολόγος, as the Church salutes him, in the liturgical troparion, with the following words: "the pastoral power of your theology vanquished the vanity of the orators."⁴² This pastoral orientation of theology did not mean a creation of a theological "digest" for quick consumption by the faithful, or a descent of theology to a "popular level," but rather "the uplifting of the Church into theological consciousness,"⁴³ with its goal to prepare everyone in the Church to receive the Orthodox faith and to become, in the truest sense of the term, "theologians," i.e., those concerned with God and open to the imminently practical significance of all dogma and theology—the supreme end of union with God.

How did Gregory arrive at and develop within himself this pastoral dimension of theology? This integration between theology and pastoring was a result of his development as a bishop as well as what personally took place in his life at this time. Just prior to his arrival in Constantinople, in 379, Gregory's friend Basil died. For Gregory, this was the last of a number of deeply felt bereavements. In the early

⁴¹A. Schmemann, *Church, World, Mission* (Crestwood, NY., 1979), p. 119.

⁴²See the Menaion, January 25th, Troparion, Tone 1: "The pastoral power of your theology vanquished the vanity of the orators. You have sounded the depths of the Spirit of God, and were given the gift of eloquence as well. Pray to Christ our God, Father Gregory, that he may save our souls.

⁴³A. Schmemann, *Church*, pp. 119-20.

370s, he delivered funeral orations for his brother, sister, father and mother.⁴⁴ These five deaths, along with his own illness, created within Gregory a “sensitivity to human experience and its end” which prepared him for expounding theology in a pastoral manner. Through these experiences Gregory developed a “consolation philosophy” in which θεολογία (“theology”) and παραμυθία (“consolation”) not only explained death as separation from the world and ascent to God,⁴⁵ but which also granted him a profound sense of compassion for the situation of his fellow Christians. Gregory presented theology in its purest pastoral form, as the knowledge of truth which is to save, and not merely to adorn the Church with an intellectual elite. The urgency to make of the faithful in Constantinople a theologically-minded Church, in which theological positions were not considered as a harmless intellectual game of “interesting points of view”—a total reduction of the purpose of theology—but rather, where theology challenged the Nicene Christians with the choice between life and death, salvation and damnation was the fundamental “pastoral” and “soteriological” achievement of Gregory while in the capital city.

This existential theology addressing the needs of Christians in Constantinople Gregory demonstrated in other areas as well. Besides his panegyrics on Athanasios and Basil, Gregory delivered homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany and Pascha which reveal that “he knew the pastoral needs of his people; he knew how to rise to the occasion; and he was clearly influenced by the liturgical pattern of the Christian year.”⁴⁶ His liturgical sermons set the pattern for future explanations of theology within the context of Church life, establishing Orthodox theology as the basis of the ἐκκλησιαστικὸν φρόνημα (“the mind of the Church”) which pastorally conveys to the faithful the soteriological nature and demands of the faith. Gregory’s *Oration*

⁴⁴Orat. 7, 8, 18.

⁴⁵Robert C. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and Christian ‘Paideia’ in Basil and the Two Gregories* (Philadelphia, 1975), p. 219f.

⁴⁶Young, *From Nicaea*, p. 120; also, we should note that only the homilies of Gregory the Theologian were illustrated in iconographic form. According to N. P. Kondakov, the reason for this was due to their pastoral depth: “Son éloquence chaude et brillante, riche en comparaisons imagées, pleine de formes classiques et de pensées élevées, charmait ses admirateurs comme ses disciples. De là l’immense quantité de copies d’oeuvres de cet orateur . . . de là aussi le grand nombre de miniature qui ornent ses Homélies.” *Histoire de l’art byzantin considéré principalement dans les miniatures* 2 (Paris, 1891), p. 57. For the illustrated manuscripts and investigation of them, see George Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenos* (Princeton, 1969).

on *Holy Baptism* was not only an occasion for preaching the Orthodox trinitarian faith within the context of church life, but also was an example of affirming the interplay between dogma and spirituality, proposing that baptism, chrismation and eucharist were to be the basis of one's own actualizing the trinitarian life. In sum, Gregory was able to delineate the faith in pictorial and rhetorical language which appealed to his contemporaries. He expressed a greater sense of the depth and mystery of the Orthodox Christian concept of God and his revelation to the world than those who were continuously engaged in technical debate.

What then can we who live in the West glean from Gregory the Theologian's success in integrating theology and the "pastoral situation?" Permit me to suggest three points. First, we must reorient ourselves by making our theological efforts to aim at the situation of Christians in the Church, not to make them "more educated" or "proud of Orthodoxy," but rather to convince them that the multitude of philosophies and theories present in today's world can actually lead to spiritual death. Second, along these lines, a "pastoral revitalization" of theology must develop a healthy apologetical purpose and nature which demands a critique of the culture in which the Orthodox Christian is immersed today. The West of course does not present us with an Orthodox culture, i.e., the complex of values, norms and ideas by which one can evaluate his life, which is related to a large degree to the Orthodox faith and its "worldview." Even though all past Orthodox "worlds" can be criticized for their shortcomings, nevertheless it must be made clear "that in the West one cannot at this time be Orthodox by osmosis."⁴⁷ And third, to meet this end, we must insist that the proper function of theology is not to deal with the "abstract human being," but rather is to begin in what Gregory did in his time: "an exorcism of culture, a liberating reconstruction of words, concepts and symbols, of the theological language itself."⁴⁸

By way of conclusion, it would be unsophisticated and unfair of us to search the life, work and writings of Gregory the Theologian in order to abstract an antidote for every malady in our contemporary theological arena. There exists no one person in the history of the Church to whom we could find all the answers; besides, if we look closely, we will discover many failures and blunders in Gregory's life,

⁴⁷ Schmemann, *Church*, p. 119.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 122.

of which type we certainly would wish to avoid: such as his strained relationship with Basil as a result of being consecrated bishop of Sasima; his unfortunate support of the scheming Maximos the philosopher, who befriended Gregory and then had himself secretly consecrated archbishop; and his hasty resignation and exit at the Council of Constantinople (381) which demonstrated that perhaps he was never cut out to be a bishop.

My thesis is that Gregory's lasting contribution resides in his method of theology and personal development into a theologian. He, perhaps more than any other father of the Church, can be consulted in order to discover how to understand theological method as well as how to develop into a theologian. Gregory was a missionary theologian in that his taking on the classical Greek world, converting its thought and language to suit the needs of the Church, reveals to us that our method of theology must entail a genuine Christian idea of conversion, i.e., of a decisive choice and commitment to truth which rejects and transcends any provincialism of thought and vision, ethnic self-consciousness and self-centeredness. Gregory was a prophetic theologian in that he personally demonstrated that theology is not a separate science targeting a narrow circle of professional intellectuals, writing and working for each other, aiming, in the end, to please their peers with a type of intellectual and analytical self-righteousness. Instead, theology must be defined as the description, in words proper and adequate to God, of the "charismatic" and "prophetic" experience of the mystery of God's dynamic relationship with human beings and all of creation. The theologian according to Gregory must be a prophet of experience. Finally, Gregory was a pastoral theologian by identifying with the Church and her life, being attentive to the real needs of the situation, by rooting all "practical" needs of the faithful in the realm of their ultimate theological implications.

The life, work and writings of Saint Gregory the Theologian manifest the perennial and vital concerns which must be addressed by the Church and her theologians: how to deal with the world and its culture; how to experientially attain to the truth; and how to convey the Christian message to our contemporaries. Gregory's development into "the Theologian" was a result of his lack of fear as well as discerning clarity in attempting to integrate the conflict of ideals his contemporaries faced. I believe his pioneering efforts and contributions are still valid and can serve as a "theological map and key" for understanding the nature of theology and the development of an

Orthodox theologian. Therefore, it is in this existential sense that the Church's calling him ὁ Θεολόγος will never be considered liturgical hyperbole:

Let us sing the praises of the prince of bishops,
The great teacher of the Church of Christ,
The mighty organ of the Spirit of God,
The well-tuned lyre, the sweet-sounding harp:
Rejoice, O depth of divine grace!
Rejoice, O heavenly and exalted mind!
O Gregory, father and theologian.⁴⁹

⁴⁹See the Menaion, January 25th, hymn at Vespers, at “Lord, I have cried.”



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The Educational Philosophy of Saint Gregory the Theologian

DIMITRIS ALEXANDRAKIS

LOOKING AT THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION, ONE FINDS the names of Saint Basil the Great, Saint John Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and other Christian educators and teachers, but one looks in vain to find the name of Saint Gregory the Theologian.

One reason for this is the fact that Saint Gregory did not write any work whose title included the word "education." This does not mean, however, that he was not interested in education. Quite the contrary, all his impressive and highly refined writings contain a priceless treasure of educational philosophy.

Although none of his works bears the title education, I must state that several of them are more educational than education itself. In addition, he was a highly respected teacher, hierarch, and scholar; his education was so deep, thorough, rich, many-sided, and excellent that it would not be an exaggeration to say that no modern educator can be compared to him.

He pointed out that the only glory he tried to achieve in this life was the glory that goes with education. Thus both his exceptionally inspired literary works and his deeply philosophical and holy life constitute a deep and inexhaustible reservoir of educational ideas, spirituality, and philosophy.

By Saint Gregory's educational philosophy, I mean his ideas, thinking, beliefs, pedagogical principles, activities, and proposals in regard to issues and questions about education. Some of these issues I will discuss in this paper.

In order to write this paper, I collected many of his educational ideas which are scattered throughout his writings. I then proceeded to classify, organize, and synthesize these ideas, thus forming a general picture of his educational philosophy.

Besides the available English translations from the original Greek, which I have used in this paper, several translations are mine.

The main purpose of this paper is to honor the celebration of the Sixteen Hundredth Anniversary of Saint Gregory's death and also to indicate that this remarkable teacher, great theologian, and holy father of the Church has a vital, important, and significant place in the history and philosophy of education.

The Value and Worth of Education

Saint Gregory, throughout his life, held education in high esteem. He himself tells us that from the very beginning, a passion for letters possessed him.

In his Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Poems, which should be entitled "The Educational Philosophy of Saint Gregory," the holy Father glorifies, signifies, and praises in the most philosophical and elegant way the value and worth of education.

According to him, education has a great and enormous value because it makes its possessors perceptive, intelligent, civilized, and happy. Education was valued by Saint Gregory for its immense power to confer on its possessors rationality, clear thinking, morality, and the quality of critical judgment.

The ability to reason, to make healthy and sound evaluations, was of particular value and has a special place in Saint Gregory's writings. Equipped and armed with the power of reason and the methods of logic, individuals are able, according to the holy father, to distinguish rational from irrational, moral from immoral, true from false, right from wrong, worthy from worthless and to assess for themselves their own strengths or weaknesses.

Education was highly valued by Saint Gregory because of the results it achieves in making young people worthy citizens in a variety of ways. With the benefit of education, people in everyday life become civic-minded, cultural-minded, creative and productive in the arts and sciences, and rich in spiritual life.

In his brilliant and renowned work, *The Panegyric on Saint Basil*, Saint Gregory expresses his educational philosophy as follows:

I take it as admitted by men of sense, that the first of our

advantages is education; and not only this our more noble form of it, which disregards rhetorical ornaments and glory, and holds to salvation, and beauty in the objects of our contemplation: but even that external culture which many Christians ill-judgingly abhor, as treacherous and dangerous, and keeping us afar from God. For as we ought not to neglect the heavens, and earth, and air, and all such things, because some have wrongly seized upon them, and honour God's works instead of God: but to reap what advantage we can from them for our life and enjoyment, while we avoid their dangers; not raising creation, as foolish men do, in revolt against the Creator, but from the works of nature apprehending the Worker, and, as the divine apostle says, bringing into captivity every thought to Christ.¹

Without the benefit of education, the resulting ignorance and illiteracy become serious obstacles for a productive and happy life and dangerous sources of wrongdoing and evil. But above and beyond all, Saint Gregory trusted in the power of education, for he thought that it could guide man to God by cultivating the soul and mind, the greatest gifts God gave to man.

Giving advice to his nephew Nikovoulos, and to a young person named Seleukos, Saint Gregory emphasizes the value and power of education with the following eclectic, inspired, and meaningful thoughts:

When you desire education, you desire the best thing in your life; education guides you to virtue which is the beauty of your mind and the beauty of your soul; education equips you with knowledge, it gives wings to your thoughts, it makes you gentle, kinder, civilized, worthy and a respectable citizen; education is your best ornament in youth and old age; education makes you the king of nature; education is your good fame in life and after life; education brings you near God who is the Divine Source of truth, goodness, everlasting life and happiness.²

¹ St. Gregory the Theologian, *The Panegyric on St. Basil*, trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. 7 (Michigan, 1893), p. 398.

² Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Five, Nikovoulos to His Son and Poem Eight, To Seleukos*, in *Hellenes Pateres tes Ekklesias*, Vol. 11, ed., E. G. Meretakis (Thessalonika, 1985), pp. 81-101, 138-56.

Saint Gregory explains to Nikovoulos and Seleukos that education is a treasure and they should never exchange it for anything else, for all the goods on earth could not pay the price for education. He tells them that education is a treasure which is immortal and cannot be taken away from anybody, neither from the enemies, the barbarians, the sycophants, nor the thieves, nor even from death.

He wisely reminds them that education is an expensive and painful process, but that in the long run, ignorance and illiteracy are more painful and more expensive.

Saint Gregory has no doubts whatsoever that when education is based on moral, spiritual, and logical foundations, its results will be profoundly positive, beneficial, and effective. For this reason, the holy Father and great theologian carefully states that we should not despise and hate education as some do. Those individuals who hate, dislike, and reject education are uneducated, uncivilized, and ignorant. These people would like all people to be like them, so that they would easily avoid and escape criticism of their illiteracy and ignorance. He formulated his viewpoint as follows:

We must not then dishonor education because some men are pleased to do so, but rather suppose such men to be boorish and uneducated, desiring all men to be as they themselves are, in order to hide themselves in the general and escape the detection of their want of culture.³

The Main Purposes of Education

In Saint Gregory's writings, education is presented as one of the best instruments to human perfection; that is, a thorough moral, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development of human personality.

The holy Father thus underscores the holistic approach to education. This includes the cultivation and development of mind, soul, will, emotions, conduct, character, cultural, and spiritual qualities.

Saint Gregory shares with the other Church Fathers the view that general education has great benefits for anyone who possesses it. Regarding this ever contemporary and important issue the holy Father eloquently states:

. . . as life and reason grew and rose together, our illustrious friend was educated: not boasting of a Thessalian mountain cave, as the workshop of his virtue, nor of some braggart Cen-

³St. Gregory, *The Panegyric on St. Basil*, p. 399.

taur, the tutor of the heroes of his day: nor was he taught under such tuition to shoot hares, and run down fawns, or hunt stags, or excel in war, or in breaking colts, using the same person as teacher and horse at once; nor nourished on the fabulous marrows of stags and lions, but he was trained in general education, and practiced in the worship of God and, to speak concisely, led on by elementary instructions to his future perfection. For those who are successful in life or in letters only, while deficient in the other, seem to me to differ in nothing from one-eyed men, whose loss is great, but their deformity greater, both in their own eyes, and in those of others. While those who attain eminence in both alike, and are ambidextrous, both possess perfection and pass their life with the blessedness of heaven.⁴

Alongside with Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Quintilian, and Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory also emphasizes the importance of children's holistic education and he advises that it should start during the early years of a child's life.

He took this period with the greatest of seriousness, for he thought that education started long before the child was sent to school, and that during these earliest years, the foundations of the entire character were most effectively built.

For this reason, he advises parents and teachers that children never be left by themselves. He thought that a child, if left to itself, is like a plant left to struggle and grow wild. For the best results he stresses that special care should be taken at this age with respect to what stories, myths, and language they hear, and what things they see. He thinks that the task of education is easier when it takes place in the earlier years. In explaining this issue he underscores the following:

. . . to impress the truth upon a soul when it is still fresh, like wax not yet subjected to the seal, is an easier task than inscribing pious doctrine on the top of inscriptions — I mean wrong doctrines and dogmas — with the result that the former are confused and thrown into disorder by the latter. It is better indeed to tread a road which is smooth and well trodden than one which is untrodden and rough, or to plough land which has often been cleft and broken up by the plough: but a soul

⁴Ibid.

to be written upon should be free from the inscription of harmful doctrines, or the deeply cut marks of vice: otherwise the pious inscriber would have a twofold task, the erasure of the former impressions and the substitution of others which are more excellent, and more worthy to abide.⁵

In his writings he always states the great role of the family in the upbringing and education of children and he constantly warns parents for the crucial responsibility they have to teach their children good pedagogical principles and carefully guide them to achieve the image and likeness of God, for in the last analysis, according to Saint Gregory, this is the ultimate purpose of all education. Discussing the instructive power of parents and the educational value of the home he states:

Legend indeed has its instances of men whose children were many and beautiful, but it is practical experience which has presented to us these parents, whose own character, apart from that of their children, was sufficient for their fair fame, while the character of their children would have made them, even without their own eminence in virtue, to surpass all men by the excellence of their children. For the attainment of distinction by one or two of their offspring might be ascribed to their nature; but when all are eminent, the honor is clearly due to those who brought them up.⁶

In his eulogy, *On His Sister Gorgonia*, Saint Gregory, stressing the educational value of the family, points out that:

Of her prudence and piety no adequate account can be given, nor many examples found besides those of her natural and spiritual parents, who were her only models, and whose virtue she in no wise fell short, with this single exception most readily admitted, that they, as she both knew and acknowledged, were the source of her goodness, and the root of her own illumination.⁷

⁵ St. Gregory, *In Defense of His Flight to Pontos*, trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. 7 (Michigan, 1893), p. 213.

⁶ St. Gregory, *The Panegyric on Saint Basil*, p. 398.

⁷ St. Gregory, *On His Sister Gorgonia*, trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. 7 (Michigan, 1893), p. 241.

It should be pointed out that Saint Gregory constantly emphasizes the power of reason and clear thinking. In counseling his nephew Nikououlos, he characteristically tells him that through the cultivation of his sacred mind (*ἱερὰ φρένα*), he would be able to achieve his goals. In his *Tenth Poem*, a beautiful analysis of virtue, Saint Gregory teaches him the following precepts:

I will instruct you in little philosophy: God is either mind or some other greater essence, which can be understood only by the powers of the mind. There are two natures of mind: rational and irrational. The first is near God and is filled with honor and is characterized by logical thinking and sound mind. They call it logical from the name Logos. The other nature of mind, irrationality, stays far away from God and Logos and is unrelated with them.⁸

The holy father constantly encourages choosing the rational side of life, for he thinks that a good mind is associated with the beauty of the intelligent and moral life as well. In moral life, the role of the intellect is to distinguish good from evil, truth from falsehood, rational from irrational, and to point out the proper way of life; it is up to man's will, however, to decide what to accept.

Thus, the cultivation of all human potential (spiritual, rational, moral, and emotional, is absolutely necessary, for it greatly helps the individual to develop the ability of moral judgment, which Saint Gregory, as well as other Church fathers, call *diakrisis* (discernment). The concept of discernment has a central position in Christian philosophy, education, and life in general, and it is considered to be the source, the root, and the synthesis of all virtues.

Speaking about virtues, Saint Gregory recommends that schools should try to teach students as many virtues as possible, for according to him, the real happiness is the virtuous life. Among the virtues he discusses are: faith, mercy, prayer, obedience, hope, humility, compassion, hospitality, courage, philanthropy, justice, moderation, prudence, and above all, love, which for him is the path to *theosis*.

He teaches that all virtues are connected, each one of them dependent upon the other, and all of them contributing to the perfection of human beings.

⁸Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Ten, On Virtue (B)*, in *Hellenes Pateres tes Ekklesias*, Vol. 9, Epimelites Ekdoseos, E. G. Meretakis (Thessalonike, 1985), p. 167.

Besides the moral, spiritual, and intellectual virtues, the holy Father proposes that schools, and education in general, should also teach and cultivate social and cultural values.

In his writings he reminds teachers and responsible people to teach youth to love and honor their country, to appreciate culture, and to care for the common good.

No doubt, virtues such as patriotism and civic responsibility indicate to some degree the realistic elements of Saint Gregory's educational philosophy.

The Qualifications and the Role of the Teacher

Speaking about the art of teaching, he points out that the profession of teaching is one of the holiest among human activities. Teachers educate and cultivate student's souls and minds, which, according to the holy Father, are the divine qualities that God gave to them.

He believes that the human mind has the elements of the likeness and image of God; therefore, the teacher should pay the greatest attention in cultivating the faculties of students' minds carefully and systematically.

The importance of the teacher's role in the process of education has been pointed out by most of the Church Fathers and teachers. The Church Fathers were keenly aware that spiritual, literary, and intellectual goals were almost impossible for one to achieve without the guidance of a teacher. Saint Gregory, too, strongly emphasizes the necessity of having a teacher.

The work and task of the teacher, however, is both great and difficult. The success of the teaching process depends to a great extent on the training and preparation of teachers. The holy Father is deeply concerned about this preparation.

In his work, *Defense of His Flight to Pontas*, he stresses that before we undertake the instruction and education of others, we must sufficiently educate ourselves; otherwise we do a great injury to the souls and minds of people. The saint expresses his philosophy in these words:

Accordingly, to undertake the training of others before being sufficiently trained oneself, and to learn, as men say, the potter's art on a wine-jar, that is, to practice ourselves in piety at the expense of others' souls, seems to me to be excessive folly or excessive rashness — folly, if we are not even aware of our own ignorance; rashness, if in spite of this knowledge

we venture on the task.⁹

He continuously and emphatically states that it is irrational, foolish, reckless, and evil for someone to want to instruct others without first being trained and educated himself. Masterful in every grammatical and philological technique and language device, Saint Gregory uses the following powerful didactic and graphic example to get his message across:

But if you are blind, why in your blindness state, presume to teach and guide? What darkness besets a man whose teacher is himself blind? How both are doomed to fall together into the pit of ignorance.¹⁰

Wish, desire, and enthusiasm are extremely important motives for teaching, but they should be supported by sufficient knowledge, pedagogical skills, teaching abilities, necessary experience, and other qualifications. The great teacher illustrates this critical and vital principle with the following examples:

Did you find a marathon-runner who hasn't exercised his legs? Did you ever hear of a first-rate painter who did not initially experiment with several colors? And did you ever hear of a rhetorician without skills and experience in speeches, and a physician without proficient education in the medical profession?"¹¹

Such pedagogical words were mostly addressed to priests and bishops but we should keep in mind, however, that teaching is an inseparable part of the priesthood's prophetic ministry. Thus, Saint Gregory's teaching applies to anyone entrusted with educating minds and souls. Highlighting and underscoring the high value of teaching, Saint Gregory categorically states: "For the teaching and guiding of man, the most variable and manifold of creatures seems, to me, indeed to be the art of arts and sciences of sciences."¹²

Elaborating on the preeminent value of teaching, he makes a clear

⁹ St. Gregory, *In Defense of His Flight to Pontos*, p. 214.

¹⁰ Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Twelve, Concerning Himself*, in Hellenes Pateres tes Ekklesias, Vol. 10, ed., E. G. Meretakis (Thessalonike, 1985), p. 191.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 550-65.

¹² St. Gregory, *In Defense of His Flight to Pontos*, p. 208.

comparison between the physician and the teacher. The physician labors for the health of the body which is failing matter and which absolutely must be dissolved and undergo its fate. The teacher labors for the intellectual, spiritual, and moral welfare of the soul, which is divine and partakes of the heavenly heritage and, after death, goes back to its divine source.¹³

He fully recognizes the value and great contribution of both professions, but he thinks that the teacher's work is more difficult, more influential, and of more consequence. This is clearly indicated by the nature of its subject matter, the power of its art and the object of its exercise. He stresses the difficulties and obstacles to teaching and guiding people as follows:

Place and time and age and season and the like are the subjects of a physician's scrutiny; he will prescribe medicines and diet, and guard against things injurious, that the desires of the sick may not be a hindrance to his art. Sometimes, and in certain cases, he will make use of the cautery or the knife or the severer remedies; but none of these, laborious and hard as they may seem, is so difficult as the diagnosis and cure of our habits, passions, lives, wills, and whatever else is within us, by banishing from our compound nature everything brutal and fierce, and introducing and establishing in their stead what is gentle and dear to God . . . the nature of all these objects of the watchfulness of the physician remains the same, . . . but in our case, human prudence and selfishness, and the want of training and inclination to yield ready submission are a very great obstacle to advance virtue, amounting almost to an armed resistance to those who are wishful to help us.¹⁴

Lucidly articulating his thought, the holy Father states that the overriding objective of the teacher's art is to provide the soul with wings, to rescue it from the world and give it to God. For this distinctive reason, the teacher should constantly watch over the souls and minds of his students; he should take the greatest care if they are in danger, heal them if injured, make virtue reside in their hearts, make Christ to dwell in them and finally, he should try to make them spiritually happy and divine.¹⁵

¹³Ibid. p. 208.

¹⁴Ibid. pp. 208-09.

¹⁵Ibid. p. 209.

According to Saint Gregory, the teacher should be thoroughly educated, especially in the subject he teaches. In addition, the teacher should be *anthropos paideias*, that is a man of letters and pedagogical experience. In other words, the teacher should be equipped with a general education, encyclopedic knowledge, good character, and adorned with ethical, religious, and cultural values and virtues, but above all with wisdom and holiness. Saint Gregory, in emphasizing the seriousness of the priesthood and its teaching mission, writes:

A man must himself be cleansed, before cleansing others: himself become wise, that he may make others wise; become light, and then give light; be hallowed, then hallow them; be possessed of hands to lead others by the hand, of wisdom to give advice. . . . There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, a man wise in his own conceit; and a still greater evil is to charge with the instruction of others a man who is not even aware of his own ignorance.¹⁶

Saint Gregory, as well as all the Church Fathers and teachers underscore the importance of a teacher's love and care for his students. These pedagogical qualities were also underlined more recently by many great educators, among them the famous teacher and educator Pestalozzi, "the father of modern elementary school," who based all his educational philosophy and pedagogical system on love and care for his students.

Epitomizing Saint Gregory's philosophy of education, we may say that, for him, love and concern for students is not only a method of education, or approach to education, but rather the essence, the substance, and meaning of education.

He believes that a teacher without love and care for his students is not a teacher but an actor and a drum (cymbal) which makes loud sounds and noise. According to him a good teacher should be armed with experience, love, frankness, and a good ethos.¹⁷ He explains his thought with the following powerful and meaningful teaching: "Either to teach with ethos or not to teach at all."¹⁸

Students' Academic Life

With regard to the students, whom the holy Father greatly loved,

¹⁶Ibid. p. 219.

¹⁷Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Ten, On Virtue (P)*, p. 171.

¹⁸Ibid. p. 415.

he advised them that education should always be their priority. He reminds students that education and learning is a difficult process; it takes time and should be done seriously, gradually, and systematically. On this issue he writes:

Tell me, good sir, do you call dancing anything, and flute-playing? Certainly they would say. What then of wisdom and being wise, which we venture to define as a knowledge of things divine and human? This also they will admit. Are then these accomplishments better than and superior to wisdom, or wisdom by far better than these? Better even than all things, I know well that they say. Up to this point they are judicious. Well, dancing and flute-playing require to be taught and learned, a process which takes time, and much toil in the sweat of the brow, and sometimes the payment of fees, and entreaties for initiation, and long absence from home, and all else which must be done and borne for the acquisition of experience: but as for wisdom, which is chief of all things, and holds in her embrace everything which is good, so that even God himself prefers this title to all the names by which He is called; are we to suppose that it is a matter of such slight consequence, and so accessible, that we need but wish, and we would be wise?¹⁹

In this difficult process of learning, Saint Gregory asks the students to respond positively and to exhibit the spirit of cooperation, by displaying the virtues of diligence, discipline, and desire for learning and education, for nothing is better than education for those who possess it.

The holy Father counsels students to set goals in their lives because without goals they will always stay at the starting point. He encourages them not to be afraid of difficult tasks and at the same time warns that excellent and difficult things are not easily achieved. Moreover, he reminds them that in the process of human development and excellence, they should cooperate with God and ask for his help. They should know that humans without Christ are not able to move one step forward. Saint Gregory expresses his beliefs in the following thoughts: "Have you seen a bird fly without air? Have you seen a dolphin swim without water? For this reason do not present yourself

¹⁹St. Gregory, *In Defense of His Flight to Pontos*, p. 215.

as someone great even if you are intelligent, strong, and the wisest among all men.”²⁰

He admonishes students to use the holy books as the most essential means for their education. He advises them that the Holy Bible is the best teacher of virtue, the school of holiness, the divine sermon, the true philosophy, the inexhaustible reservoir of wisdom, love, justice, and the perfect education of God. He urges them to feed on the Holy Scriptures by studying each one of them with all their readiness; then, by applying the Scriptures, they will grow rich in contemplation and rich in the splendor of life.²¹

Regarding secular knowledge, pagan literature and worldly wisdom, the holy Father advises students to use the selective method. He tells them to read and use those books which praise and teach virtue, those books which help them in their moral, intellectual and cultural progress and advise them to avoid, reject, and cast away those books which are inappropriate, injurious, and useless for their education.

He recommends to them the methods of the florist and the honeybee. He presents his thought with the following didactic examples. “The florist cuts off the rose-flowers and tries to avoid its thorns to escape any possible injuries of his fingers. The honeybee, too, in order to select honey, goes only to the flowers which have honey and avoids the other flowers.”²²

The relationship between pagan learning and Christian education was a thorny problem and a burning issue of Saint Gregory's time and afterwards.

Pagan learning appeared to be essential as a foundation for a decent education, and it was imperative that every citizen receive such learning. Many Christians did see the need for a substantial intellectual and literary foundation for their faith. Others saw learning and reason as unnecessary for their faith. Thus, Christians were caught in a cultural dilemma. From one side, classical education, logic, human philosophy, and polytheism; from the other, Christian learning, faith, divine philosophy, and the true God.

²⁰Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Nine, On Virtue*, in *Hellenes Pateres tes Ekklesias*, Vol. 9, ed., E. G. Meretakis (Thessalonike, 1985), pp. 154-56.

²¹St. Gregory, *On the Great Athanasios*, trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. 7 (Michigan, 1893), pp. 270-71.

²²Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Eight, To Seleukos*, p. 139.

Some teachers protested that true Christian wisdom was being sacrificed to the gods of pagan learning; others accepted classical literacy and education only as cultural ornamentation. Reconciling the irreconcilable was not easy. Most Eastern Christian teachers, however, including Saint Gregory, had been educated in a cultural climate filled with pagan learning and they were able to distinguish between the style and method of classical education and the sometimes non-Christian values, ideas, and principles presented.

Thus, Saint Gregory as well as Saint Basil proposed the principle of selection. In other words, Christians could use classical education but were cautioned to use only that learning which was appropriate and constructive for their Christian life and to reject whatever jeopardized their faith and Christian teachings.

Using the method of selection, students could safely study the wisdom of the classics without at the same time being exposed to dangerous elements in their content.

The principle of selection (the method of the florist and the method of the honeybee), established by Saint Gregory and Saint Basil, were accepted by the Christian teachers, both Eastern and Western, and subsequently became the standard for studying classics in most Christian schools to this day.

Throughout his writings, we find that Saint Gregory encourages young people to visit the local church, the local monastery, the local bishop, and the local priest, in order to enrich their lives with Christian religious education, ecclesiastical learning, and spiritual wisdom.

Regarding friendship, Saint Gregory points out that a virtuous and faithful friend is a treasure. The type of friendship he had with Saint Basil when they were students in Athens, reveals to us his philosophy on this important issue of students' school life:

We were impelled by equal hopes, in a pursuit especially obnoxious to envy, that of letters. Yet envy we knew not, and emulation was of service to us. We struggled, not each to gain the first place for himself, but to yield it to the other; for we made each other's reputation to be our own. We seemed to have one soul, inhabiting two bodies. And if we must not believe those whose doctrine is: all things are in all; yet in our case it was worthy of belief, so did we live in and with each other. The sole business of both of us was virtue. . . . Our associates were not the most dissolute, but the most sober of our com-

rades; not the most pugnacious, but the most peaceable, whose intimacy was most profitable: knowing that it is more easy to be tainted with vice than to impart virtue; just as we can more readily be infected with a disease, than bestow health. Our most cherished studies were not the most pleasant, but the most excellent; . . . Two ways were known to us, the first of greater value, the second of smaller consequence: the one leading to our sacred buildings and the teachers there, the other to secular instructors. All others we left to those who would pursue them — to feasts, theaters, meetings, banquets. For nothing is, in my opinion, of value, save that which leads to virtue and to the improvement of its devotees.²³

The holy Father, throughout his inspirational writings, reminds students to avoid the company of wicked people. Instructing the young Seleukos, he teaches him the following:

The one lesson I want to teach to you is that young persons should absolutely avoid bad friendships and the immoral deeds and pleasures which result from these associations. For many people are like the grazing animals, full of psoriasis or some other disease. These morally diseased people associate with immature youth and with their deceiving bait they try to infect them with their own immorality. In this way their association with more people will hide their immoral actions. You should protect yourself against these types of friendship: for as St. Paul thinks, “bad friendships ruin a good character.”²⁴

Pedagogical Methodology

Regarding the method of teaching, Saint Gregory deals with it, not surprisingly, with extraordinary ability, educational wisdom, and profound knowledge. Carefully examining his philosophy of education, we are able to clearly see and perceive that it gives plenty of evidence that took serious account of the individuality of each student. He thus recommended a rich variety of methods and instructional processes which he selected according to the age, intellectual level, spiritual state, and natural ability of the students. He illustrates his thesis as follows:

For men and women, young and old, rich and poor, the sang-

²³St. Gregory, *The Panegyric on St. Basil*, p. 402.

²⁴Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Eight, to Seleukos*, p. 141.

guine and despondent, the sick and whole, rulers and ruled, the wise and ignorant, the cowardly and courageous, the wrathful and meek, the successful and failing, do not require the same instruction and encouragement.²⁵

Writing in a style reminiscent of modern scholarship, he states that not all students must be treated in the same way. Some should be led by example, some require motivation, others challenge, others restrain; some benefit from praise, others from reproach and discipline. He expounds his educational philosophy with the following elegant and refined thoughts:

As then the same medicine and the same food are not in every case administered to men's bodies, but a difference is made according to their degree of health or infirmity; so, also, are the souls treated with varying instruction and guidance. To this treatment witness is borne by those who have had experience of it. Some are led by doctrine, others trained by example; some need the spur, others the curb; some are sluggish and hard to rouse to the good, and must be stirred up by being smitten with the word; others are immoderately fervent in spirit, with impulses difficult to restrain . . .²⁶

The holy Father reminds teachers that they should know that the body of the church and school consists of different minds, idiosyncrasies, interests, desires, expectations, hopes, and characters. This is a natural aspect of all life, he explains. The animals have different forms and sizes, the soil has different qualities, the stars have different brightnesses, and the trees have different beauty. Humans also have different talents, natural gifts, and qualities. He beautifully highlights this as follows:

Nor must he suppose that the same things are suitable to all, just as all have not the same stature, nor are the features of the face, nor the nature of animals, nor the qualities of soil, nor the beauty and size of stars, in all cases the same. . . . And since the common body of the church is composed of many different characters and minds, . . . it is absolutely necessary that its ruler should be at once simple in his uprightness in

²⁵St. Gregory, *The Panegyric on St. Basil*, pp. 210-11.

²⁶Ibid. p. 211.

all respects, and as far as possible manifold and varied in his treatment of individuals, and in dealing with all in an appropriate and suitable manner.²⁷

He proposes that the subject matter and the entire spectrum of education should be fitting to the different characteristics of students. In other words, the individual differences are relevant, both to the methods and objectives of teaching. The holy Father is setting forth a pedagogical principle which today is universally recognized: education must adapt itself to the student:

For some need to be fed with the milk of the most simple and elementary doctrines, viz., those who are in habit babes and, so to say, new-made, and unable to bear the manly food of the word: nay, if it were presented to them beyond their strength, they would probably be overwhelmed and oppressed, owing to the inability of their mind, as is the case with our material bodies, to digest and appropriate what is offered to it, and so would lose even their original power. Others require the wisdom which is spoken among the perfect, and the higher and more solid food, since their senses have been sufficiently exercised to discern truth and falsehood, and if they were made to drink milk, and fed on the vegetable diet of invalids, they would be annoyed. And with good reason, for they would not be strengthened according to Christ, nor make that laudable increase which the Word produces in one who is rightly fed, by making him a perfect man, and bringing him to the measure of spiritual stature.²⁸

To some degree his philosophy regarding individual differences is similar to the pedagogy of Isocrates, who founded his theory of teaching on the doctrine of natural ability. But the holy Father moved past Isocrates in believing that training and education could modify the weakness of nature which Isocrates rejected.

The art of teaching, the holy Father explains, consists in motivating the student to learn in the most effective way. In order to succeed in this task, the teacher should try to teach the subject matter which is useful, excellent, and worthy of his students. He should proceed through learning step by step, leaving out nothing. In addition, the

²⁷Ibid. p. 208.

²⁸Ibid. p. 214.

work given to the students should be given in a gradual and systematic way.

In describing this method, he effectively uses a graphic picture from nature. He writes that calm and steady rain is much more useful for the soil because it renders it deep and fertile. On the contrary, heavy and violent rain, instead of providing help, produces negative results, destroying and carrying away the soil.²⁹

Other pedagogical methods, fundamental to his theory of education, are habituation, personal example, and discipline.

Concerning habituation, Saint Gregory's philosophy is similar to that of Plato and Aristotle. Like them, he believes that the source of virtue is good habits, which become fixed in a person as a result of past guidance, education, reasoning, choices, and free will. Saint Thomas Aquinas, too, defines the fixed habit of doing good things as virtue.

Saint Gregory advises that it is a crucial duty of parents and teachers to teach young people good habits from an early age, because a habit usually remains rooted in a person for the rest of his life.

Similar principles and pedagogical ideas are found in Rousseau's educational philosophy. In his most celebrated treatise in education, *Emile*, Rousseau points out that we are educated by three ways: by nature, by habits, and by teaching.

Regarding the personal example, classical and Christian educators alike attribute to it enormous power.

The instructive power of personal example is based upon the fact that man is imitative. Saint Gregory strongly believes in the significance of personal example as a teaching method. He thinks that a moral and virtuous personality has a very strong and pervasive influence upon man; for this reason, he often puts forth the examples of both the holy and spiritual personalities described in the Holy Scriptures, as well as the virtuous ones who are recorded in classical literature.

In his splendid and superb poem, *On Virtue*, a philological masterpiece of literature, education, theology, and philosophy, the holy Father advises students to read the Holy Scriptures and classical literature from which they can be inspired to imitate the life and virtues of such persons as Christ, Moses, David, Saint John the Baptist, the

²⁹Gregory the Theologian, *Homily Twenty-Six*, in *Hellenes Pateres tes Ekklesias*, Vol. 9, ed., E. G. Meretakis (Thessalonike, 1985), p. 171.

Virgin Mary, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Socrates, Diogenes, Crates, Anaxarchos, Penelope, Aristeides, Alexander the Great, and a host of others. He argues that such personalities excite the students' desire for great deeds. This desire motivates the student to emulate these exemplary figures.

Modern educators believe that the teacher's personal example also has a great influence upon the students as they are prone to identify with their teachers and to imitate them. For this reason, they state that it is of paramount importance that the teacher set a superior example of personal virtue and character.

With regard to the method of discipline, the church Fathers recognized its important educational role and function. Discipline is an essential element in Christian life, since the Christian life is basically a life of discipline and obedience to God's will. Saint Gregory, too, accepted the method of discipline, and he praised its usefulness.

Speaking about discipline, the holy Father points out that discipline is the safeguard of hope, the foundation of faith, the guide of salvation, the motive of good disposition, the teacher of virtue, the requirement of excellence, the architect of a good character, and the assistant in achieving heavenly rewards.³⁰

Regarding disciplinarian punishment, he proposes to use reasonable discipline. By reasonable discipline he means penalties such as reproof, rebuke, order, advice, and also frightening threats and blame. Saint Gregory summarizes his position in these remarks:

Some are benefitted by praise, others by blame, both being applied in season; while if out of season, or unreasonable, they are injurious; some are set right by encouragement, others by rebuke; some, when taken in public, others, when privately corrected. For some are wont to despise private admonitions, but are recalled to their senses by the condemnation of a number of people, while others, who would grow reckless under reproof openly given, accept rebuke because it is in secret, and yield obedience in return for sympathy.³¹

The holy Father states that the basic purpose of the penalties should be for the benefit of the offender rather than for revenge. These

³⁰Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Nine, On Virtue (B)*, in *Hellenes Pateres tes Ekklisiaς*, Vol. 9, ed., E. G. Meretakis (Thessalonike, 1985), pp. 61-226.

³¹St. Gregory, *The Panegyric on Saint Basil*, p. 208.

penalties in reality are not penalties, but general measures and means for regulating one's life. These penalties are beneficial because they keep young people away from what is disgraceful, while at the same time helping them to become diligent and virtuous. Moreover, discipline helps them to excel in their education.

At the same time, Saint Gregory proposes the method of reward. By reward he means the employment of praise and prize, which are the essential characteristics of today's educational doctrine of positive reinforcement, of which so much has been written by B. F. Skinner. Saint Gregory, sixteen hundred years ago, recognized the educational value of the method of rewards when he recommended it to teachers. He thought that rewards would motivate and stimulate young people toward their goals more effectively than physical punishment. He wisely recommends teachers to follow the middle road and to be:

. . . angelic in appearance, more angelic in mind; calm in rebuke, persuasive in praise, without spoiling the good effect of either by excess, but rebuking with the tenderness of a father, praising with the dignity of a ruler. . . . In some cases we must even be angry, without feeling angry, or treat them with a disdain we do not feel, or manifest despair, though we do not really despair of them, according to the needs of their nature. Others again we must treat with condescension and lowliness, aiding them readily to conceive a hope of better things. Some it is often more advantageous to conquer by others — to be overcome, and to praise or deprecate, in one case wealth and power, in another poverty and failure.³²

He was convinced that any imposition of force in education was unnecessary with qualified teachers. The good teacher will be able to lead his students not by his authority and force but by the influence of persuasion, good will, and choice. He writes:

For what is involuntary apart from its being the result of oppression, is neither meritorious nor durable. For what is forced, like a plant violently drawn aside by our hands, when set free, returns to what it was before, but that which is the result of choice is both legitimate and enduring, for it is preserved by the bond of good will.

³²St. Gregory, *On the Great Athanasios*, pp. 271-72.

In discussing Saint Gregory's methodology, I should mention some useful techniques he proposes for good epistolary. When his nephew Nikovoulos asked him for some help on how to write good letters, he sent to him a little essay instructing him on the subject.

Examining his very interesting work on epistolary, I found the following rules, techniques, and directions which he thinks are necessary for writing a good letter.

First: The length of a letter is determined by the amount one has to say. When there is not much to say, one ought not to keep complaining about things over and over again. When there is, one ought not to be measuring words. Thus, one should avoid both extremes and try to achieve the midpoint.

Second: Concerning the question of clarity, the very best letter is the one which addresses itself to the ordinary man and to the scholar alike; to the common man as something on the popular level, and to the scholar as something above the popular level. Thus, the meaning of a letter ought to be at once completely clear, because a letter which requires explanation is as irritating as a puzzle because it takes some time to solve.

The third point about a letter is the attraction, charm, and the delight of its style. This we can achieve if we use the proper embellishment and refinement. This comes when we use meaningful sayings, proverbial wisdom, epigrams, and witticisms which give a sweetness to style. At the same time we must avoid excessive use of these devices and techniques. High-flown philosophy is inappropriate in the letter. The good letter is to be written in a plain style; the long complicated sentence is out of place. Excess is superfluous, while defect is unrefined.

The holy Father tells his nephew that one of the virtues of a good letter is that it always reveals the personality of the author. In other words, the letter should be as genuine and natural as possible. He also instructs him to classify epistolary in two forms: formal and informal. In the formal letter he must be serious and selective in his ideas; in the informal one he can use humor, jokes, and can be less selective in his ideas.

To help his nephew to clearly understand his instruction in writing good letters, he uses the following graceful example:

My final remark shall be one which I heard a clever man make

³³St. Gregory, *The Panegyric on St. Basil*, p. 208.

about the eagle, that when the birds were electing a king, and came with various adornment, the most beautiful point about him was that he did not think himself beautiful. This point is to be especially attended to in letter-writing, to be without adventitious ornament and as natural as possible.³⁴

In addition, he advises him that good writing is a preparation for good speaking and a necessary foundation for superior oratory. Moreover, he instructs him that the art of writing well requires constant practice. He should realize that good writing is the result of long rewriting and practice. For this reason he tells him: ". . . The rest you will work out for yourself, as you are quick at learning, and those who are clever in these matters will teach you."³⁵

Finally, the holy Father reminds his nephew, and some of us, that it is very important always to respond to those from whom we received a letter. If we do not respond, we harm the feelings of others and at the same time we lose their respect, esteem, and regard.

The Education of Women

Regarding the education of women, Saint Gregory speaks of the theological relationship between men and women, saying that both are created by God and both can imitate the goodness of God, because of their capacity for virtue.

The education of girls was limited in Classical Greece, in the Hellenistic era, the Roman period, and also during the time of Saint Gregory. A girl's education was primarily domestic. Her principal teacher was her mother who taught her to be a good wife and effective mother.

The holy Father praises the domestic skills and abilities which a woman should have for the effective and successful management of her home. But he goes on to say that women should also be equipped and decorated with moral, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual virtues as well as with literary.

In the *Eulogy*, delivered for the death of his father, he also praises his mother Nonna for her educational, moral, and spiritual qualities as well as for her effective domestic managerial skills. He calls her

³⁴St. Gregory, *Miscellaneous Letters*, trans. by P. Schaff and H. Wace, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. 7 (Michigan, 1893), EP. LI, pp. 476-77.

³⁵Ibid. p. 477.

a wise leader and excellent teacher who exercised a great influence on all members of her family. In praising her spiritual life and her virtuous influence upon her husband he writes:

. . . she fell before God night and day, entreating for the salvation of her head with many fastings and tears, and assiduously devoting herself to her husband, and influencing him in many ways, by means of reproaches, admonitions, attentions, estrangements, and above all by her own character with its fervor for piety, by which the soul is specially prevailed upon and softened, and willingly submits to virtuous pressure.³⁶

In the *Eulogy*, delivered upon the death of his sister Gorgonia, the holy Father praises her modesty, good character, spirituality, prudence, piety, keen intellect, philanthropy, hospitality, goodness, and also her intelligent chanting and her ability to read and explain the Holy Scriptures. About her modesty and excellent life he writes:

In modesty she so greatly excelled, and so surpassed, those of her own day — to say nothing of those of old time who have been illustrious for modesty — in regard to the two divisions of the life of all, that is, the married and unmarried state, the latter being higher and more divine, though more difficult and dangerous, while the former is more humble and more safe. She was able to avoid the disadvantages of each and to select and combine all that is best in both, namely, the elevation of the one and the security of the other, thus becoming modest without pride, blending the excellence of the married with that of the unmarried state.³⁷

He also calls her a wise counselor and teacher, not only for her own family and relatives, but also for all those around her. The only wealth left to her children was the imitation of her example and the emulation of her love for education and virtue.

In his instructive work, *Exhortation to Olympiada*, an excellent moral and educational letter to deaconess Olympiada, Saint Gregory

³⁶St. Gregory, *On the Death of His Father*, trans. by P. Schaff and H. Wace, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. 7 (Michigan, 1893), p. 258.

³⁷St. Gregory, *On His Sister Gorgonia*, trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. 7 (Michigan, 1893), p. 240.

further reflects his philosophy regarding women's education and moral formation of his time.

In this work, the holy teacher stresses the following instructive principles: the girls' respect for their parents, the necessity of having a good and polite personality, the importance of refined cultural manners, and the possession of virtues such as morality, piety, humility, moderation, and prudence.

In addition, he emphasizes the value of wisdom in everyday life, good friendships, the Church life, domestic cares, respect for the laws of marriage, and love for her husband. He encourages her "to have high thoughts without being snobbish."³⁸

Moreover, he reminds Olympiada of the respect and honor that goes with education and exhorts her to be a good source for her children's upbringing and education.

This information indicates to some degree the desired educational values and principles in which a woman should be brought up and educated, according to Saint Gregory.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to state that the inspired writings and teachings of Saint Gregory as well as the works of the other church Fathers and teachers constitute unique and lasting sources of educational ideals, pedagogical practices, and instructive guidelines for today's schools, teachers, parents, educators, and for our lives in general.

For Saint Gregory, education is an essential and fundamental means for human development, perfection, and achievement of both human and divine happiness. From an educational point of view, such educational philosophy is realistic, meaningful, inspirational and applicable.

Finally, I would like to point out that many learning theories, methodologies, pedagogical ideas, values, and principles of contemporary education are simply further development of the patristic philosophy of education and life.

³⁸Gregory the Theologian, *Poem Six, Exhortation to Olympiada*, in *Hellenes Pateres tes Ekklesias*, Vol. 11, ed., E. G. Meretakis (Thessalonike, 1985), p. 107.



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THE GREEK ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

HOLY CROSS CONFERENCE ON SAINT GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN (Part Two)

ALEXANDRAKIS: The Educational Philosophy of Saint Gregory the Theologian

BAILEY: Reluctance in Religion: Communicating the Spirituality of Saint Gregory the Theologian to Undergraduate Students

DITMARS: Gregory the Theologian's Panegyric on Saint Basil

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THE GREEK ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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THE GREEK ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

HOLY CROSS CONFERENCE:

Saint Gregory the Theologian, Patriarch of Constantinople
PAPADEMETRIOU: Gregory the Theologian, Patriarch of
Constantinople

MC GUCKIN: ‘Perceiving the Light from Light in Light’
Oration 31.3. The Trinitarian Theology
WESCHE: ‘Mind’ and ‘Self’ in the Christology of
Saint Gregory the Theologian

ROGICH: The Development of a Theologian According
to Saint Gregory the Theologian

EGAN: Toward Trinitarian Perichoresis
FRANK: The Incomprehensibility of God in the
Theological Orations of Saint Gregory the Theologian

MICHOPoulos: Gregory the Theologian’s Ontology
of Compassion

RUSSELL: Saint Gregory’s Exegeses Against the Arians: Still a
Valuable Christian Tool

NORRIS: Gregory the Theologian and Other Religions
HARAKAS: Ethical Teaching in Saint Gregory the
Theologian

HARRISON: Poverty, Social Involvement, and Life
in Christ According to Saint Gregory the Theologian

LIM: Knowledge and Community in the late Antique
Constantinople

The Greek Orthodox Theological Review

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Editor's Note

The Greek Orthodox Theological Review is happy to host the papers read at the conference held on Saint Gregory the Theologian, Patriarch of Constantinople. The conference, sponsored by Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology and held on the Hellenic College/Holy Cross campus, was ably chaired by the Reverend Doctor George C. Papademetriou, Director of the Library and Adjunct Associate Professor of Theology who also edited the papers presented here.

There is also a need to thank Dr. Evie Zachariades-Holmberg, Dr. Sophronia Tomaras, and Dr. Aristotle Michopoulos for lending their expertise and skills to this volume.

N. M. Vaporis
Editor

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The Council ‘in Trullo’: Basis for Ecclesiastical Reform?
A Conference Commemorating the 1300th Anniversary
of the Pentekte Ecumenical Council ‘in Trullo’**

PATSAVOS: Ecclesiastical Reform: At What Cost?

**OHME: The Causes of the Conflict about the Quinisext
Council: New Perspectives on a Disputed Council**

**MCMANUS: The Council in Trullo: A Roman Catholic
Perspective**

CHRYSSAVGIS: The Council in Trullo and Authority in Spiritual Direction

CALIVAS: The Pentekte Synod and Liturgical Reform

**DURA: The Canons of the Sixth Ecumenical Synod
Concerning Fasting and Their Application to the Present Needs of
the Orthodox Faithful**

HARAKAS: Ethical Teachings in the Canons of the Pentekte Council

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Editor's Note

The Greek Orthodox Theological Review is happy to host the papers given at the conference entitled, "The Council 'in Trullo': Basis for Ecclesiastical Reform? A Conference Commemorating the 1300th Anniversary of the Pentekte Ecumenical Council 'in Trullo'."

This conference was organized and ably chaired by DR. LEWIS J. PATSAVOS, Professor of Canon Law at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, who also edited the conference papers. I personally am indebted to him as I am to Mr. Anton Vrame for his contribution.

I have had the distinct honor and indeed the great pleasure of associating myself with *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* since 1966, when I was appointed to the Editorial Board by Fr. Leonidas Contos, then President of Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. In 1969, the Editor, the Rev. Dr. Demetrios J. Constantelos, appointed me Assistant Editor and upon his departure from Hellenic College and Holy Cross in 1972, I became Acting Editor. During the same year, I was appointed Chief Editor by His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos. Hence I began contributing to the *Review* with Volume 11, Number 2, 1965-66 and now end my association in an editorial capacity with Volume 40, Numbers 1-2, 1995. It has been a wonderful tenure of nearly thirty years for which I thank God.

I would like to take this opportunity to remember the Editors of the *Review* who preceded me: the founding Editor, + the Rev. Dr. Nicon D. Patrinakos, 1954; + the Rt. Rev. Bishop Athenagoras Kokkinakis, 1955-58; the Rev. Dr. John D. Romanides, 1959-65, the Rev. Dr. Leonidas Contos, 1966; the Rev. Dr. Demetrios J. Constantelos, 1971-72.

Nomikos Michael Vaporis
Editor

**To His All Holiness Bartholomew
Archbishop of Constantinople,
New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch,
for his commitment to the ongoing study of our canonical
tradition and hitherto contribution to this task, this volume is
respectfully dedicated.**

Conference Editor's Note

The year 1992 marked the 1300th anniversary of the Pentekte Ecumenical Council, variously known as the Quinisext Council, Trullanum, Council "in Trullo," or simply as the Sixth Ecumenical Council. With the publication of the present volume, one of the main purposes of the conference convened to commemorate this historic occasion has become a reality.

In view of the fact that in its time the Pentekte Council served to clarify the Church's position on a number of practical matters, it has been the intention of those who planned the conference to raise concerns of timely importance today. The papers here presented provide a variety of issues for further discussion and reflection. In this way, it is hoped that an awareness and appreciation of the complexities involved in resolving them has been achieved. It is also hoped that this will contribute to a constructive, ongoing dialogue and an eventual, informed resolution to the problems they pose.

The theme of the conference, "The Council 'in Trullo': Basis for Ecclesiastical Reform?", was the context for investigating critical topics such as the status of the council in East and West; spiritual direction and penitential discipline; liturgical renewal; fasting practice; ethical teachings of the council; and problems associated with marriage of clergy, celibacy of bishops, and interfaith marriages. The question put before each of the contributors was this: Given the teaching of the canons of the Council "in Trullo" on the issues discussed, is reform desirable? Indeed, is it justified?

The topics were raised from the perspective of the canons of the council and then examined in light of the needs of the Church today. Specialists in the field of Canon Law who participated in the conference, as well as other distinguished scholars from here and abroad interested in its theme, have contributed to this volume. A common conviction is the need for a correct interpretation of Orthodox canonical tradition, so that ecclesiastical reform not be pursued simply for the sake of reform.

There is, furthermore, a clear understanding that according to a basic canonical principle, reform can only be initiated by a synod of equal or greater authority than the one which initially adopted the practice in ques-

tion. Nevertheless, by having the issues at hand addressed at all, the process of refinement and reform, if deemed necessary, has already begun.

Sincere thanks are hereby expressed to His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos of North and South America for his encouragement in the convocation of the conference, and most especially to His Grace Bishop Methodios of Boston, President of Hellenic College and Holy Cross, for his enthusiastic support, both moral and material, of the entire endeavor.

A word of appreciation to my teaching assistants Timothy Patitsas, Peter Pappas, George Parthenios, and Earl Cantos is also in order. Their assistance in the re-reading and further refinement of the manuscripts submitted for publication has been invaluable.

Lewis J. Patsavos
Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1993

Patriarchal Letter

To Professor Elias Patsavos, beloved son in the Lord of our mediocrity, may the grace and peace of God be upon you.

We learned with gladness from your letter of February 20th about the Canon Law Conference with the theme “The Council ‘in Trullo’: Basis for Ecclesiastical Reform?” to be convened at Holy Cross School of Theology on March 16th and 17th within the context of the annual Patriarch Athenagoras Memorial Lectures.

The Pentekte Ecumenical Council “in Trullo” (691/692), the 1300th anniversary of which we observe this year, accomplished a most important legislative task related to the codification of our ecclesiastical canonical legislation. This accomplishment has since then regulated to a great degree the life and order of the Church universal. The holy canons and ecclesiastical decrees are not, as is well known, simply legal decrees, but the expression in legal form of Orthodox ecclesiology. Their application contributes to the work of salvation in Christ in the world and in behalf of humanity. Certainly, for the success of this work in each generation, the non-fundamental canons can be adapted to the social and historical needs of the time. This, however, is carried out only by the competent ecclesiastical legislative authority *of the same or greater authority* as that which initially issued them.

We commend His Grace Bishop Methodios of Boston, President of Hellenic College-Holy Cross School of Theology, as well as Professor Patsavos and his associates on the occasion of the convocation of this conference. We bless its work and its purpose, as well as all its participants. We pray for its success, and for God’s grace and blessing upon it.

BARTHOLOMAIOS
Archbishop of Constantinople,
New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch,
praying fervently to God in your behalf.
February 29, 1992

Message of His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos

To Dr. Elias Patsavos, Conference Coordinator:

It is with deep regret that I am unable to be with you this evening for the historic conference commemorating the 1300th anniversary of the Pentekte Ecumenical Council.

I pray that God will bless you and guide you in your most worthy deliberations, and I trust that your untiring efforts will be rewarded with great success.

I convey to you and all the distinguished participants my paternal best wishes and prayers.

**IAKOVOS
Archbishop of North and South America**

March 16, 1992

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The Incomprehensibility of God in the Theological Orations of Saint Gregory the Theologian and Its Implications for the Contemporary Debate About the Fatherhood of God

G. L. C. FRANK

THE DEBATE ABOUT THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD IS NOT AN UNIMPORTANT or alien question for Christian theology in general or for the modern feminist movement in particular. Moreover, this is not the first time that the issue has been raised in the history of the Church. The question of language, of naming God and speaking about the divine mystery, was a crucial one in the early centuries and one which attracted the attention of the Cappadocian fathers. Saint Gregory the Theologian, for example, was pressed by his Eunomian opposition to take up a position as to how one could both maintain the incomprehensibility of God and yet talk about God using language with images drawn inevitably from human experience. That was Saint Gregory's problem then, and it is still very much our problem today.

The Apophatic Way

The very notion of God's incomprehensibility and its concomitant apophatic or negative theology have come to be viewed in some theological circles as the distinctive hallmark of Eastern Orthodox theology, and in a sense, this is true. The Orthodox East has indeed kept alive the apophatic tradition. The negative way, of course, never died out completely in the West either, but its radicalism tended to be obscured and downplayed.¹ Consequently, apophaticism is often

¹ See, e.g., Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cam-

understood as one of the most important contributions of Eastern Christianity to the theological endeavor. Many Orthodox theologians, moreover, have accepted this accolade and description. In a response to the controversy over the theology espoused in the 1970s by the Anglican bishop, Dr. John Robinson, for example, Vladimir Rodzianko contrasted what he saw as the essentially apophatic theology of the orthodox Greek fathers with what he saw as the essentially cataphatic theology of the heretic Eunomios. He pointed out that the fathers questioned not only a "grandfather in heaven" (Robinson's complaint), but the very name "God" itself and even Jesus' expression, "Our Father who art in heaven." Rodzianko did not, however, attempt to deal with the very thorny question which arises out of this approach, that is, what language, if any, is appropriate and/or necessary in theological discourse. Rather, he was content to defend the apophatic way as the only one which is fitting with regard to the unknowable God and which leads us to final ignorance transcending into vision.² I am not rejecting Rodzianko's argument, but I am using it to suggest that if apophatic theology is isolated or left to itself, it inevitably raises some serious questions. Feminists today can rightly ask what significance or meaning or validity there is in calling the Incomprehensible One "Father" or in limiting one's naming of him/her to "Father?"

Sallie McFague, for example, has specifically appealed to the apophatic tradition, arguing that only by calling God "Mother" as well as "Father" can one express the incomprehensibility of God and convey the truth that God is not like anything else one knows.³ In this line of argumentation, the "essentially Eastern Christian apophatic contribution" is taken up by feminist theology and used in order to challenge the monopoly of "divine Fatherhood language" so deeply embedded in the Orthodox Christian tradition. This is an apophaticism gone wild, an apophaticism ripped out of its context and isolated from both revelation and the resulting positive theology which flows out of God's self-manifestation.

bridge and London, 1973) reprint of the 1957 translation, p. 26.

² "Honest to God Under the Fathers' Judgment," *Orthodoxy and the Death of God. Essays in Contemporary Theology*. Studies Supplementary to Sobornost, No. 1, ed. A. M. Allchin (London, 1971), pp. 51-53.

³ "God as Mother" in *Weaving the Visions. New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol Christ (San Francisco, 1989), p. 139.

Orthodox theology must therefore be increasingly careful in expressing and nuancing the meaning of the apophatic tradition; otherwise, one can very easily end up on theological ground which may in fact be alien to the Catholic tradition.

When one looks at the *Theological Orations* of Saint Gregory, one discovers a very sober and balanced approach to the incomprehensibility of God and the apophatic way of theology. Gregory, of course, clearly defended the unknowability of God. To claim that one can rationally comprehend God, he argued, is simply to make the impossible claim that God can be circumscribed.⁴ What God is in his nature (*φύσις*) and essence (*οὐσία*) no man has ever discovered or can discover, at least in this present life.⁵ While rational nature longs for God, for the “First Cause” (*ἡ πρώτη αἰτία*), it is unable to grasp (*καταλαβεῖν*) the divine mystery.⁶ Consequently, one cannot define or understand God’s essence even by using language which is appropriate when speaking about the divine persons, such as the term “unbegotten” (*ἀγέννητος*) as it is applied to the source of the divine monarchy.

This identification of the divine nature with “unbegottenness” was precisely what Eunomios and his followers were doing, thus enabling them to assert that the Only-begotten Son was “in essence” dissimilar from God.⁷ Saint Gregory rejected this Arian cataphatism with regard to God’s essence and defended the absolute necessity

⁴ Καὶ οὕτω λέγω τὸ περιγραπτὸν πάντως εἶναι τὸ θεῖον, καὶ εἰ διανοίᾳ καταληπτόν· ἐν γὰρ περιγραφῆς εἴδος καὶ τὴν κατάληψιν. *Theologica secunda* (Oratio 28), x. The Greek text can be found in either Vol. 36 of J. P. Migne, or more recently in Vol. 250 of *Sources chrétiennes* (SC). I am following the PG text, the only one available to me at the present. For an English translation, see either *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, Vol. 7, or E. R. Hardy, ed., *The Christology of the Later Fathers*, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia, 1954).

⁵ Gregory left as an open question whether it might be possible in the future life to know God’s essence. It was his opinion that this would be possible when that which is divine and godlike in man, i.e., his mind and reason, have mingled with their like in God and when the image of God in man has ascended to its Prototype. *Theologica secunda*, 17.

⁶ Ibid. 13.

⁷ *Theologica tertia* (Oratio 24), xii. In his *Liber Apologeticus*, 15, for example, Eunomios described God’s essence as unbegotten: “. . . μήτε τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ προσιεμένης γένεσιν (ώς ἀγενάτου) . . .” *Eunomios. The Extant Works*, text and translation by Richard Paul Vaggione (Oxford, 1987), pp. 50, 52. See also Book 2 of Eunomios’ *Apologia Apologiei*, a summary of which is in Vaggione’s work, pp. 111ff. In identifying God’s nature as unbegotten, Eunomios was able, indeed required, to assert that the begotten Son has neither the same nature nor a similar nature as that of God. He is dissimilar in nature from God. See, e.g., *Liber Apologeticus*, 9, 10, 20, 21, 22 in *Extant Works*, pp. 42, 44, 46, 58, 60, 62.

of the apophatic approach. One must, for example, describe God as incorporeal (*άσώματος*), he argued, but this word does not define the divine nature any more than terms such as “unbegotten” (*άγέννητος*) or “unoriginate” (*άναρχος*) or “unchanging” (*άναλλοιωτος*) or “in-corruptible” (*άφθαρτος*).⁸

If what God is not were all that could be said about the divine reality, then one would certainly be in a quandry as to theological discourse. One could perhaps say nothing at all and simply bask in mystical silence. Saint Gregory, however, was clear that the apophatic way, while necessary in reflecting on the divine essence, is not the whole truth in theology. A person, he argued, who says what God is not, without going on to say what he is, acts in the same way as the person who, when asked how much two times five is, does not answer “Ten,” but says, “It is not two, or three, or four, or five, or twenty, or thirty, or any number below ten, or any multiple of ten.” It is much easier of course, Gregory admitted, to show what a thing is not than to show what it is, but the goal of stripping away what it is not is to demonstrate what it is.⁹ Gregory was, however, well aware of the dangers inherent in trying to say what God is. One could, for example, easily fall into deception and idolatry by looking at visible things and out of them create a false god.¹⁰ Despite this danger and despite the inability of the human being to comprehend the whole and to comprehend divinity, Gregory argued that one is able to sketch God according to his attributes (*τὰ κατ’ αὐτὸν*) and thereby to acquire a certain indistinct (*άμυδρός*) and weak (*άσθενής*) vision of God.¹¹ Inasmuch as this is possible, he asserted, the most appropriate terms for the divine essence are Θεός, “God,” and ὁ ὤν, “the One who is.” It is ὁ ὸν which is the more accurate of the two, since it more adequately reflects a reality whose being, whose “isness,” is absolute and which is not bound up with something else.¹² Even this name, however, does not reveal or define the divine essence, but only directs our minds toward it by means of an image of the truth (*τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας ἔνδαλμα*).¹³ Here, then, one finds Gregory willing to

⁸ *Theologica secunda*, 9.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. 13, 14.

¹¹ *Theologica quarta* (Oratio 30), 17.

¹² Ibid. 18.

¹³ Ibid. 17.

employ the cataphatic method of theology, but safeguarding the impenetrability of the divine mystery by means of a repeated assertion of the incomprehensibility of divine nature.

The Divine Paternity and Cataphaticism

Does Saint Gregory's limited acceptance of the cataphatic way mean that theological reflection and discourse are confined to those ideas and terms which reveal God's actions or energies in creation, to what Gregory called those attributes of God which give us a certain indistinct and weak image of God? Is this the level on which the language of divine paternity is to be located—terminology which in a limited, partial way tells us something about his relationship to us? Is calling the Transcendent One "Father" similar to naming him "Light," "Spirit," "Almighty," "Lord," "God of salvation," etc.? If this is the level on which the Fatherhood of God is true, then why not call God "Mother" as well as "Father?" In her book, *Sexism and God-talk*, Rosemary Ruether, like other feminists, has argued quite rightly that one finds in the biblical tradition both male and female imagery applied to God.¹⁴ Should our naming of God, therefore, not reflect this and include female roles and experience as well as male roles and experience? If God in some sense relates to us and to the world in a motherly as well as a fatherly way, is Sallie McFague not right when she asks us to speak of God as "Father-Mother," thus enabling us to be faithful to the biblical revelation of God in personal terms without falling into an idolatrous identification of God as a literal father?¹⁵

Is not this feminist argument consonant with the intention of apophatic theology in recognizing the inability of human language to "capture" God with any image? In urging the use of language from the wider range of human experience as applied to God's relationship to us, is feminist theology not merely asserting what Saint Gregory already taught, that is, that the language we use with regard to God is only made up of weak, indistinct, limited images? Is calling God our Mother any less accurate than calling him our Father, since

¹⁴ *Sexism and God-talk. Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, 1983), pp. 54-59. Ruether, however, finds the very notion of divine "parenting" restrictive and suggests that theology begins with language for the divine as redeemer and liberator, as fostering full personhood, and in this context speak of God/dess as creator and source of life. Ibid. pp. 68-70.

¹⁵ "God as Mother" in *Weaving the Visions*, p. 141.

the divine reality is neither male nor female in itself? Would we not in fact be gaining something by this expanded naming of God, in that a wider range of images would point to other dimensions of God previously ignored or downplayed?

“Theology”—The Context of God’s Fatherhood

Feminist Christian theology does, however, diverge from the thinking of Saint Gregory in a very significant way. By and large, it has not taken seriously the question as to whether the divine paternity is a matter of “theology” properly speaking, that is, a matter of language reflecting inner trinitarian relations, or whether it is an issue of “economy,” that is, of how one speaks about God’s relationship to the created order. If the Fatherhood of God is indeed a matter of economy, it seems to me that feminist theology is correct and the term “Mother” is appropriate, since it, no less than “Father,” can give us some weak, indistinct, and limited idea of how God relates to us. It is at least as appropriate as naming God “King,” “Lord,” “Almighty,” “Savior,” “Sanctifier,” etc.—terms which in various ways point to the relationship of God to the world.

In his fight against Eunomian theology, Saint Gregory developed ideas which have a great deal to do with this issue. Is God eternally the Father or is he the Father “economically,” so to speak? Eunomios had argued that “Unbegotten” is God’s proper name, since this name reveals his nature. “Father,” however, is a more recent name, since God became a Father when he begat a Son. “Father” and “creator” are terms, he claimed, which are applied to God on the basis of his activities.¹⁶ Thus, for Eunomios, the divine paternity was a description of an economic activity and did not reflect or reveal anything about God’s inner divine life. This understanding is well expressed in a confession of faith appended to manuscripts of Eunomios’ *Liber Apologeticus*. In this confession, God is repeatedly referred to as “the Unbegotten” (ὁ ἀγέννητος) and only in the last sentence is there a passing reference to God as Father.¹⁷ Eunomian theology was willing to relegate the Fatherhood of God, if not to the dustbins, at least to a less important, more relative status in theological discourse. In

¹⁶ *Extant Works*, p. 112. See also the response of St. Gregory of Nyssa to this Eunomian assertion in his “Answer to Eunomius’ Second Book.” For an English translation, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, Vol. 5, p. 252.

¹⁷ *Extant Works*, p. 75.

this sense, many feminists may feel more at home with Eunomios than with Saint Gregory.

For Gregory, calling God “Father” was a matter of theology properly speaking, and not of God’s economy. The term “Father” is neither a name of God’s essence (*οὐσία*) nor of his energies (*ἐνέργεια*), he argued, but of the relation (*σχέσις*) in which God stands to the Son and the Son to God.¹⁸ In Gregory’s understanding, there never was a time when God was not Father to the Son.¹⁹ From eternity the Father is the “Begetter” (*ὁ γεννήτωρ*) and the “Emitter” (*ὁ προβολεύς*), the Son is the “Begotten” (*τὸ γένημα*), and the Holy Spirit is the “Emission” (*τὸ πρόβλημα*).²⁰ While other names and titles reveal God’s authority (*ἐξουσία*) and government of the world (*οἰκονομία*), the proper name (*τὸ ἴδιον ὄνομα*) of the Unoriginate One is Πατήρ, the proper name of the Only-begotten One is Υἱός, and the proper name of the Proceeding One is τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἀγιον.²¹ These names reveal the relation of the divine persons to each other and preserve their identities within the one nature and dignity of the Godhead (*ἐν τῇ μιᾷ φύσει τε καὶ ἀξίᾳ τῆς θεότητος*).²² Divine paternity, then, does not have to do with God’s relationship to us, at least not directly. According to Gregory, God is our God, properly speaking, but he is not our Father, properly speaking. Even in Christ, he is only the Father, properly speaking, of the Word, and not of the human nature.²³ Consequently, from this perspective, the question of God’s paternity cannot be reduced to a matter of images describing how God relates to us and to the world—a strong tendency within feminist theology.

“What Matters Most to Us”?

Saint Gregory was aware that the language of Father, Son, and Spirit was drawn from human experience and so even it was limited.

¹⁸ *Theologica tertia*, 16.

¹⁹ Οὐ γὰρ ἦν, ὅτε ἀλογος ἦν· οὐδὲ ἦν ὅτε οὐ Πατήρ· οὐδὲ ἦν, ὅτε οὐκ ἀληθής, η ἀσοφος, η ἀδύνατος, η ζωῆς ἐνδεής η λαμπρότητος, η ἀγαθότητος. *Ibid.* 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 2.

²¹ *Theologica quarta*, 19.

²² *Theologica quinta*, (Oratio 31), 9.

²³ Θεός δὲ λέγοιτο ἄν, οὐ τοῦ λόγου, τοῦ ὀρωμένου δέ· πῶς γὰρ ἄν εἴη τοῦ χυρίως Θεοῦ Θεός; “Ωσπερ καὶ Πατήρ, οὐ τοῦ ὀρωμένου, τοῦ Λόγου δὲ καὶ γὰρ ἦν διπλοῦς· ὅστε τὸ μὲν χυρίως ἐπ’ ἀμφοῖν, τὸ δὲ οὐ χυρίως, ἐναντίως η ἐφ’ ἡμῶν ἔχει. ‘Ημῶν γὰρ χυρίως μὲν Θεός δ Θεός, οὐ χυρίως δὲ Πατήρ. *Theologica quarta*, 8.

"I do not know how this [trinitarian divine mystery] can be expressed," he admitted, "in terms altogether excluding visible things."²⁴ Human beings have given names to God from their own attributes in accordance with their understanding of the divine reality, he acknowledged.²⁵ Gregory understood well that theological language, like all language, arises out of the human experience. His concern, however, was that the language used in theology with regard to God be appropriate and adequate to the mysterious relationship of the Unoriginate One to the Only-begotten One and the Proceeding One. For him it was not a question of, as Sallie McFague puts it, finding language that models our relationship with God on the basis of "what matters most to us."²⁶

If one begins to theologize and to create theological language on the basis of "what matters most to us," one has entered into a world bristling with possibilities, but not all of which may be adequate to the truth of God. This is precisely what Saint Gregory condemned in the polytheism of his day, what he called the deification of human passions ($\tauὰ πάθη$) and the things which people fashion or formulate ($\tauὰ πλάσματα$) in their search for God.²⁷ Gregory condemned polytheism not only because of its worship of the visible parts of creation, but because it deified those dimensions of human existence, such as beauty, strength, power, and the lower passions, which people came to value, treasure, and so worship in the gods and goddesses which they created—deities which reflect personal and social realities and those things "which matter most" to people.

Following Saint Gregory's argument, I would suggest that something similar is in fact happening today in feminist theology. One sees this especially in the radical circles of feminism, as exemplified, for example, in writings such as Nell Morton's "The Goddess as Metaphoric Image," Christine Downing's "Artemis. The Goddess Who Comes from Afar," and Charlene Spretnak's "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone."²⁸ Daphne Hampson has summed up this feminist tendency to deify what is valued: "Can there be a

²⁴Oὐ γὰρ δὴ ὑπέρχυσιν ἀγαθότητος εἰπεῖν θαρρήσομεν. . . . *Theologica tertia*, 2.

²⁵*Theologica quinta*, 22.

²⁶*Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (London, 1983), p. 179.

²⁷*Theologica secunda*, xv.

²⁸These essays appear in *Weaving the Visions*.

conceptualization of God which both reflects and undergirds a feminist ethic and a different social reality? Is God doomed to die as values change and paternity is overcome"?²⁹ Some radical feminists, therefore, have quite openly and honestly replaced the image of God as Father with that of God as Mother in order to affirm feminist values. Others have left the field of Christian theology altogether and have returned to polytheism as a way of creating various models and images of the divine which reflect those values that matter most to them.

Not all feminists, of course, have done this. Moderate or "soft" feminists do not want to eliminate masculine language, but only to complement it with maternal language so that the experience of the female half of humanity will be acknowledged in theological discourse and so that there will be no gender domination or bias in Christian teaching. Even this, however, is not without its problems. As James Moulder, a philosopher, has pointed out, this soft feminist approach, no less than the radical one, means that theology ends up telling us more about the values and desires of the human theologian than about his/her deity. Moulder argues that the clear intention and practice of feminists of the various schools strengthen Freud's theory that religion is in fact an illusion, arising out of what is most important and most interesting to us in life and reflecting a state of affairs that we wish would exist but that in reality does not.³⁰ This analysis has a great deal in common with Saint Gregory's evaluation of polytheism (despite the fact that Gregory and Freud/Moulder differ on whether there is an "objective" divine reality). Gregory was well aware of the human tendency to deify those things in our lives that we value and from which we name our gods and goddesses.³¹ This, I would suggest, also happens today when the naming of God is reduced to the issue of how we can model our relationship with God on the basis of "what matters most to us."

The Trinitarian Relationship

If we accept Saint Gregory's warning about created gods after our own desires and values, we are, nonetheless, still left with the

²⁹"Where Do We Go from Here?," *Theology*, 93/755, September/October (1990), 377.

³⁰"Why Feminist Theology Encourages Unbelief" in *Paradigms and Progress in Theology*, ed. J. Mouton, A. G. van Aarde, W. S. Vorster (Pretoria, 1988), 252-57.

³¹*Theologica secunda*, 13, 15.

necessity of talking about God in human language with images drawn from human experience. Gregory did not question the biblical and traditional language of God as Father with his Son and Spirit. He accepted it as a given in God's revelation of himself to humanity. Gregory did, however, reflect on why this language was used and what it meant. He made it quite clear that the generation of the Son by the Father was not to be thought of in a crude, physical sense, as if it occurred in a way similar to that of humans or animals. The manner by which the Father begat and by which the Son was begotten is a mystery to be honored in silence. All that one can say is that it is true.³² Moreover, the sexual language that Catholic theology uses (e.g., terms such as "Father," "Son," "generation") does not imply that there is sexuality in the Godhead or in the divine persons. In his fifth *Theological Oration*, for example, Gregory argued against the Arians that one ought not to consider God to be male (*ἀρρεν*) because he is called "Father," or that the divine nature (*ἡ θεότης*) is female (*θῆλυς*) because of the grammatical gender of the word, or that the Spirit (*τὸ Πνεῦμα*) is neutral because it is not generated.³³

If there is no sexuality in God, why then should one speak about God as the Father who generates the Son? In Gregory's opinion this was done for two reasons: 1) to affirm that the Son is from God (*χάκεῖθεν*), and 2) to assert that he is identical with the Father in essence (*ὅτι ταῦτον ἔστι τῷ Πατρὶ χατ' οὐσίαν*).³⁴ The language of a personal

³² *Theologica tertia*, 4, 7. For a similar argument with regard to the Spirit's procession, see *Theologica quarta*, 8.

³³ *Theologica quinta*, 7. This argument of St. Gregory's is a healthy reminder to those—feminist or not—who try to develop a notion of "femaleness" in God in terms of the Holy Spirit because of its grammatical gender in Hebrew or because of the Syrian tradition's usage in this matter. In a very important article, moreover, Ken Wesche has quite rightly pointed out that in St. Gregory's thinking the confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of the Father is beyond the category of gender; it is the assertion of a theological truth which leads to the right knowledge of God. Consequently, Dr. Wesche has argued that this is not "sexist," since Gregory makes very clear that the generation of the Son from the Father does not take place on the same order as human generation. Rather, it is the confession of the Christian faith whereby one is led to know that God is three because the Son is distinct from the Father and that he is also one because the Son is of the same "ousia" as the Father. "God: Beyond Gender. Reflections on the Patristic Doctrine of God and Feminist Theology," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 30/4 (1986) 302. The important question, however, not dealt with by Dr. Wesche, and the one raised by feminist theology, is, "Then why not use mother language? Would it not also be able to convey the same theological and spiritual truth as father language?"

³⁴ *Theologica quarta*, 20.

Father who begets a Son and who emits a Spirit, moreover, was used in order to guard against the platonic notion of an impersonal, involuntary, natural overflow within the Godhead—an idea not in accord with the Christian understanding of the personal trinitarian nature of God.³⁵ Gregory also rejected the rather subtle idea that the will (*ἡ θέλησις*) of God might be regarded as the “mother” of the Son. In his view, this was repugnant since it would imply the hermaphrodite deity (*Θεὸς ἀρρενόθηλυς*) of the Gnostics—an idea which certain feminists today find rather appealing.³⁶

Saint Gregory did not express very clearly the reasons he regarded the idea of a “Father-Mother” deity as so horrendous, but the answer to this question hinges, I believe, on his understanding of monarchical trinitarianism. There is in God a single origin, source, and cause—the One who begets the Son and who emits the Spirit. There is no second source of either the Son’s generation or the Spirit’s procession. In terms of the divine monarchy God is one.³⁷ Consequently, for Gregory there could be no mother alongside the Father. But why not a divine mother *instead of* a Father? The answer to this question was certainly not worked out by Gregory, but is suggested again, I would argue, by his vision of God as monarchy. In the human and animal world, the father is the origin or the source of the seed which is necessary for procreation. He is the one who gives out of himself and so causes conception to occur by passing on his life contained in the seed. The basic *image* of father, therefore, is that of one who gives. Obviously, in the world of humans and animals the mother is also a necessary component since she furnishes the egg which must be fertilized if conception is to occur. The fundamental maternal image, however, is that of one who receives from another, and so participates in the life-process. In applying this kind of language to God, it is clear that in traditional theology the analogy breaks down—there is a Father who from himself eternally causes the Son and the Spirit to be, but there is no divine mother or womb or egg which needs to be fertilized. If, however, one is to use language taken from the realm of personal existence in this world, one is faced with having to find the language which best images God as the single Begetter

³⁵ *Theologica tertia*, 2.

³⁶ Ibid. 6; *Theologica quinta*, 7. See, e.g., Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk*, pp. 59-60, and Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York, 1979), p. 48ff.

³⁷ *Theologica quinta*, 14.

who generates the Son and who sends out the Spirit. Would the use of "mother language," with its imagery of one who receives, be adequate to express this? In accepting and perpetuating the language of divine paternity, Saint Gregory was certainly aware that he and the catholic tradition were stretching sexual language and using it in a non-literal way. The very absence of a divine mother in catholic theology reveals that human, sexual categories were understood in a non-physical sense. I would argue, then, that it was Gregory's understanding of God as a communion of divine persons whose unity lay in the monarchy of the Begetter as the cause, origin, and source of the Son and the Spirit which made his acceptance of "Father language" natural and fitting. For those who accept this Greek patristic vision of the trinitarian God as both personal and monarchical, is there an alternative?

Conclusion

Saint Gregory's theology may not answer all the contemporary questions with regard to discourse about God, but it does provide us with a direction of thought, which can be summarized in the following way: 1. In his essence or nature, God is incomprehensible and unknowable. Consequently, theological reflection must always be apophatic when it approaches the divine mystery. 2. This, however, does not relieve us of the necessity of using cataphatic language that will direct our minds to the mystery by means of images of the truth. 3. Calling God "Father" is a matter of theology, properly speaking, and not of economy. It is an attempt to find language which adequately reveals the inner trinitarian life of God. It is not an attempt to describe God's relationship to us or the world. It relates to us in an indirect, improper sense. 4. Theological discourse must not have as its goal finding language that reflects our needs and values, but rather that which reflects and safeguards the revelation of God as the Transcendent One who begets the eternal Son and who emits the eternal Spirit. 5. The persons of the Trinity are not sexual beings; nor is their relationship with each other of a sexual nature. Nonetheless, sexual categories are necessary in order to express and to safeguard the personal character of God. 6. Not all sexual images, however, can do this adequately. Theology must discriminate as to what language can best reflect the Orthodox Catholic teaching of a single generative source within the plurality of persons in the God-head. However important and valid our contemporary concerns and

questions may be, I would argue that for those interested in trying to allow the patristic tradition to speak to us today, for those who want to theologize in the stream of catholic tradition, the voice of Saint Gregory still has much to say.



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laity in the governance of this Church than might be warranted by our understanding of Christian baptism and the participatory experience of American culture, this study discloses those places where lay leadership is emerging in the US.

As the Church moves forward in faithful response to Christ's mandate for witness and unity, it will be important for the Christian communities to draw on one another's experience. The collegial structures of the Roman Catholic Church in these last twenty five years have benefited greatly by reflection on the synodical tradition of the Orthodox Churches. The ecclesiology of communion that is central to any authentic understanding of Church remains the bed rock underlying these conference developments and the attempts of the US bishops to be faithful to their mission in their home dioceses, in the Church universal and in the US. The clarity about the role and integrity of the local bishop is clear in both the experience of conference and in Roman Catholic ecclesiology.

It is fascinating to note that the concerns for canonical practice and liturgical detail are among the more contentious and difficult elements in the Conference debates. This is due to structural questions about who and how decisions are to be made. However, it also witnesses to the discernment of how the role of bishop as teacher relates to the bonds of communion that keep the Church worldwide in communion. The short twenty five years of experience is an important moment in the centuries long process of spiritual renewal implied in the Vatican Council. This book will be an important contribution to this reflection and discussion.

Brother Jeffrey Gross, FSC

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Michael Azkoul, *The Influence of Augustine of Hippo on the Orthodox Church, Texts and Studies in Religion*, Vol. 56 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990). Pp. 299. Soft

The present volume was written by a person who is ultra conservative. The main objective of the book is to clarify Augustine's place in the Orthodox Christian tradition and to conclusively prove that

Augustine is a heretic who has no authoritative place in Orthodoxy.

The author, an old calendarist conservative Orthodox theologian, takes a negative position on the theology of Augustine. He examines the historical documents and concludes that Augustine is alien to Orthodoxy and that his heretical doctrines exclude Augustine from the Orthodox roster of saints and fathers.

The occasion had been given by an Orthodox Athenian layman who objected to the Archbishop of Greece for including Augustine on the calendar to celebrate his feastday on June 15. The author points out that the Archbishop of Athens appointed a committee to examine the issue and report. The report of the committee was that Augustine is a saint of the Church although he erred in several doctrinal issues. Azkoul takes issue with this position and makes an effort to prove that Augustine was not included until modern times on the list of saints of the Orthodox Catholic Church.

The basic thesis of the book is that Augustine who taught several heresies and became the source of the heretical West is not included in the Orthodox list of saints. The author examines from an Orthodox perspective the historical, theological, and philosophical objections to Augustinianism. Azkoul points out that as in Origen, so in Augustine, the "fundamental mistake of both men was their Platonism. . . . Their synthesis of Christianity and the *externa sapientia* is the dynamic of their theological and philosophical speculations, distorting Hellenism, and enervating Christianity" (p. 8).

Azkoul analyzes in a historical-critical method the evolution of Augustine's life and thought. He points out that, although the bishop of Hippo converted to Christianity, his greatest obstacle remained sensuality and his attachment to Manichean heretical system. The Platonism and Manichean philosophies remained in his unconscious and underpinned all of Augustine's teachings and doctrines. For Azkoul the African bishop was never really converted to Christianity; he remained a Manichean to the end and espoused the classical philosophy as an essential element in his view of Christian revelation.

The author in a scholarly manner analyzes the influence and authority of Augustine in the East and the West. He points out, and I think Azkoul is right, that Augustine gained "supreme patristic authority in the West" only after the Carolingian period. He also rightly points out that Augustine "was not known in the East." In the East, Azkoul points out that Augustine has not had a church or hymn in his honor; Orthodox Christians do not take his name; he

is not found in the liturgical calendar, until recently; and there is no *akolouthia* in his honor. Azkoul draws the conclusion that Augustine did not have a serious impact on Orthodox theology and life.

In researching the patristic and Byzantine sources, the author of this book clearly sets forth that the Fathers of both East and West rejected Augustine's world view based on his theories of predestination, original sin, and irresistible grace. He treats those issues as well as the theological issues in a most critical way showing that Augustine perverted the Orthodox faith in the West. The greatest mistake that Augustine made was that Plotinos was the center of his theological-philosophical system. That is, "Augustine borrowed the principle (of the *Enneads*) to develop his Christian version of Greek philosophy" (p. 129).

Michael Azkoul in this well-researched book has shown that "historically, Augustine has no cult in Orthodoxy;" and points out that "he has been condemned by indifference" (p. 271).

My personal opinion, supported by my research, is that although Augustine fell into several errors and taught heretical views before the Church took a stand on these doctrines, this does not mean that his name should be deleted or removed from the list of saints. This view is supported by such saints and prominent churchmen in the Orthodox Church as Saint Photios the Great, Saint Gennadios Scholarios, Saint Nikodemos, and Saint Nektarios who insisted on including Augustine's name on the list of Orthodox saints. The research and analysis of the works and doctrines of Augustine must continue to be done by Orthodox theologians to bring about a balanced and right Orthodox view of this great Western theologian-philosopher.

Congratulations are due to the author whose book is a critical response to the teachings of Augustine by an Orthodox theologian and deserves the attention of all theologians, both Eastern and Western. Azkoul's theological acumen and his rich research into the sources clarifies and articulates the issues that separate East and West.

George C. Papademetriou
Hellenic College

Graham Gould. *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. Pp. 8 + 202.



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Studies in this issue are: Metropolitan Emilianos of Sylviria, "We Are All Brothers and Not Aliens" (in Greek); Metropolitan Michael of Austria, "Die Rolle der Ikonen in der Liturgie der Orthodoxen Kirche"; The Reverend Presbyter Zeses, "The Contribution of the Theological School of the University of Thessalonike in its 50 years Function (1942-1992)" (in Greek); Professor Vlassis Phedas, "Uniatism: Historical Development and Ecclesiological Implications in the Ecumenical Dialogue"; Professor Lewis Patsavos, "The Relationship Between the Clergy and the People from a Canonical Perspective." Book reviews of several important titles regarding Orthodoxy are also included.

In addition, the third part of this third issue contains the intra-Orthodox and inter-Christian exchanges, visits and addresses of important leaders and representatives of other churches of the Patriarchate, and conferences and addresses of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I.

This publication is greeted with joy and the hope that it will continue to be published for many years to come.

George C. Papademetriou

Athena Schina. *The Orthodox Church and the Environment*. Greek and English. Athens, Greece: Ekdotike Athenon, 1992. Pp. 63.

The present volume is an excellent publication on the environment as manifested in the art and doctrines of the Orthodox Church.

Included in the book is an important message by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Also, Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon reports on the conference at the Orthodox Academy in Greece (November 5-11, 1991) on the protection of the natural environment and Athina Schina contributes "Nature in Byzantine Art." The text in Greek and English is very informative and explains the various art illustrations which portray nature as God's handiwork and stresses the responsibility of human beings as God's stewards to protect nature.

The book is filled with numerous iconographic illustrations of nature. In the volume is shown the natural environment where centuries ago beautiful Byzantine churches were built to glorify God and to sanctify God's creation. The artistic portrayal of the vestments,

icons, and liturgical books are rich with the interactions of the human beings, animals, and nature in God's world.

On the front cover is an icon of all God's creatures which includes man. This icon also appears on pages 28-29 and portrays Adam in the garden of Eden naming the animals. This iconographic portrayal is located at the monastery of Saint Nicholas Meteora and was painted in 1527. In this very impressive illustration, Adam is sitting with all kinds of animals—lions, sheep, horses, elephants, birds—all living together.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople has taken the leadership in the effort to protect the natural environment. The Patriarchate sponsored several important international symposia on the protection of the environment. Especially, it must be pointed out that the Patriarchate dedicated the first of September of each year, the beginning of the Church year, to praise God and his creation. Several important encyclicals from the Patriarchate have been widely publicized. This book is a result of the effort of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to emphasize to the world the responsibility to protect the environment. This book is the utmost importance because of its text and especially the artistic illustrations which emphasize the Orthodox emphasis of human responsibility to preserve and revere the environment as God's handiwork.

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The Problem of Self-Knowledge in the Poetry of Saint Gregory the Theologian

PETER GILBERT

IN THIS PAPER I SHALL DISCUSS SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH A question about the self arises in Saint Gregory the Theologian's poetry. It is sometimes said that the poems simply put into verse thoughts which Gregory has developed more profoundly elsewhere, especially in his *Theological Orations* and the Letters to Cledonius; so that, in so far as it is Gregory's *thought* that one seeks to understand, one does better to skip the poetry and look in these other places. What this lecture shall try to show is that this is not the case; there are aspects of Saint Gregory's thought which are, if anything, more developed in his poetry than anywhere else among his writings. One of these aspects is the theme of self-knowledge.

The knowledge of self is not an incidental topic in Saint Gregory's poems; it is not a side issue. It seems to go to the heart of why he writes them. Unfortunately, the way this subject has generally been approached in discussions of the poetry has been to view it as an adjunct to Gregory's supposed "pessimism"; or again, to see it as an issue that, because it seems so close to modern preoccupations, is assumed to be separable from the theological concerns that we, as modern people, supposedly no longer understand or care about. My own point of view is rather different. One of the reasons the poems are important is precisely that they point to the connections between knowing God and knowing oneself. The poems were conceived within a womb of theology; one should not ignore this fact when reading them.

The theme of self-knowledge is, of course, a very old one; it antedates Christianity. Excellent accounts have been written of the transmission of the Delphic Oracle, *gnothi seauton*, "know thyself,"

in Greek and Latin literature over the centuries;¹ I need not dwell upon the subject here. It is sometimes said that the attention given to the *gnothi seauton* tends to stand in proportion to the amount of Platonic influence that is observable within a given writer. This is perhaps an overstatement. By Gregory's day, the precept "know thyself" had long since entered into all streams of Greek philosophy. And if we are looking for the specific sources of Gregory's thought, it is not enough simply to attribute everything to Platonism, Neo- or otherwise. Often Gregory's thought on man shows something of an Aristotelian or a Cynic character. But before all else, we must take seriously Gregory's faith; Gregory's thought on man is not merely the sum total of various philosophical influences.

The Church always understood Christ to be the revealer, not only of God to man, but of man to himself. Christ shows man his true face. In a Christian hymn that probably comes from early in the second century, one of the Odes of Solomon, we read:

Behold, the Lord is our mirror:
Open your eyes and see them in him;
And learn how your face is.²

When Clement of Alexandria wrote, at the end of the second century or early in the third, about the Christian as the true gnostic, the true knower of God, he made explicit the connection between knowing God and knowing oneself. He said, "It seems, then, that the greatest of all lessons is to know one's self. For if one knows oneself, one will know God; and knowing God, one will be made like God."³ The same thing is found in the *Letters of Saint Antony*: "Truly, my beloved in the Lord—for I write to you as men of understanding, who are able to know yourselves—you know that he who knows himself knows God: and he who knows God, knows the dispensations which He makes for His creatures."⁴ Whether or not these letters actually derive from Saint Antony, they do attest to the thought of the ascetic movement of the fourth century. And in this movement, Saint Gregory

¹See especially Pierre Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même: de Socrate à saint Bernard*, 3 vols. (Paris, n.d.).

²J. A. Emerton, trans., Ode 13, in H. D. F. Sparks, ed., *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford, 1984), p. 703.

³Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, 3.1.

⁴Derwas J. Chitty, trans., *Letters of Saint Antony* (Oxford, 1975) 11.

himself was a participant; perhaps even the attention he gives to self-knowledge may be seen as a sign of his involvement.

It is, however, Saint Basil the Great who can be said to have influenced Saint Gregory the most. Saint Basil has been described, in an article published some years ago,⁵ as the originator of a Christian philosophy of self-knowledge—what the author, Ángel Benito y Durán, calls an “autognoseology”—and, through Saint Ambrose, the main source by which such an autognoseology reached Saint Augustine and the Medieval West. Basil’s sermon on the words, “Give Heed to Thyself,”⁶ ought, I think, to be required reading for all beginning students of patristics. It in fact takes up many of the arguments of what was then a standard introductory text for students of philosophy, Plato’s *Alcibiades*, and applies them to the Christian life. Basil’s basic argument is this: there is a distinction between the things which are yours and that which is *you*; as Saint Paul says (2 Cor. 12.14), “I seek not what is yours, but you.” For Saint Basil, what is you means before all else your soul; what is yours means everything you have—your possessions, family, but also your body. This body which you have, one could even say, this body which you are, is not what you are called to attend to when the scripture says, Attend to your self. It is the mind which sins most easily, and which also is most precious, and which therefore must be the most diligently guarded. Basil ends the sermon by exhorting the listener to know his own nature, since, by doing so, he will find all the more cause to glorify the Creator. I think that Saint Gregory, in his own view of human nature, has been greatly influenced by this perspective of Saint Basil’s, though he presents the task of self-understanding in a different manner; and this is perhaps because, while Basil was a theologian, a saint, a true shepherd of souls, and a very tough bishop, he was not a poet, whereas Gregory was one.

Let us turn, then, from these various influences upon Saint Gregory to Gregory himself. What does he say about self-knowledge?

He says a great deal, and did so from the beginning of his priesthood. From the time that he returned from Athens to Cappadocia he displayed a desire to live the ascetic life in solitude; and, when giving his reasons for this, he says:

⁵ Ángel Benito y Durán, “San Basilio Magno, punto partida para el estudio de la autognoseología Cristiana,” *Augustinus* 6 (1961) 315-38.

⁶ Deut. 15.9; text in PG 31.197C-217B.

Nothing seemed to me so desirable as to close the doors of my senses and, escaping from the flesh and the world, collected within myself, having no further connection than was absolutely necessary with human affairs, and *speaking to myself and God*, to live superior to visible things, . . . both being, and constantly growing more and more to be, a real unspotted mirror of God and divine things.⁷

This is from his *Apology for his Flight to Pontos*, delivered at the beginning of his career (though it is likely that the sermon received subsequent revision and expansion). He repeats these words almost verbatim at the start of *Oration 20*, delivered many years later in Constantinople. And in Epistle 153, written probably at the end of the year 383, Gregory writes to Bosporius, bishop of Colonia: “As you are master of your own opinions, so am I of mine. That troublesome Gregory will no longer be troublesome to you. I will withdraw myself to God, who alone is pure and guileless. I will retire into myself.”⁸ Essentially the same motivation as was described twenty years earlier in his *Apology*. He desires to withdraw into God and into himself. We should bear in mind that when Gregory writes this letter, he is already occupied in writing his poems. And in his poems, we have the great privilege of observing him, at home, withdrawing into God and into himself, and of hearing what he says there.

You have a job to do, soul, and a great one, if you like:
 Examine yourself, what it is you are and how you act,
 where you come from, and where you’re going to end,
 and whether to live is this very life you’re living, or something
 else besides.⁹

This is the first stanza of a short poem titled “To His Own Soul.” Saint Gregory here describes self-examination as an *ergon*, a work or task, that is set before himself. He calls this *ergon mega*: it is a big task, and he lists five questions to be raised:

⁷ *Or. 2.7*, PG 35.413; NPNF 2.7, p. 206.

⁸ Gallay, *Briefe*, p. 112; NPNF 2.7, p. 473.

⁹ Carm 2.1.78, 1-4; PG 37.1425.

- 1) What is the soul?
- 2) Why does it act the way it does?
- 3) Where has it come from?
- 4) Where is it going?
- 5) Is there something more to it than appears, that is, what is its purpose?

Behind these five questions—what? how? whence? whither? and why?—perhaps we may detect a philosophical doctrine: such questions are often connected to different kinds of ultimate cause. Aristotle taught a doctrine of four causes, the Stoics later added a fifth. Whether or not such a thing is at work here, it is clear that Gregory wishes to pursue the question of the being of the soul from every possible angle. It should also be clear that the task of self-knowledge which Saint Gregory proposes to himself involves, for one thing, some thinking. The task is not simply one of mystical, wordless enlightenment—it requires the asking and answering of questions. In his great oration *On Moderation in Theological Discussions*, Saint Gregory actually recommends the enquiry into human nature as a suitable area in which people may exercise their rational faculties, instead of focusing them unwisely upon the nature of God.

Why do you fly towards the heaven, when you are walking upon the soil? Why do you construct a tower, without having the means to finish it? Why do you measure the water in your hand, the heavens in a span, and all the earth by a handful? These immense elements: they cannot be measured, except by him who made them. Understand first of all yourself. Begin by understanding well that which is at your disposal: who you are, how you were fashioned, and how you were composed so as to be the image of God, and to be linked to what is inferior; who is it that set you in motion; what is the wisdom which is manifested in you, and what is the mystery of your nature . . . And again, I don't say to you, Be rash with this; but still, take care lest you let yourself approach what is highest and goes beyond your powers.¹⁰

In the poem *On Human Nature*, Saint Gregory begins with the

¹⁰ *Or. 32.27; PG 36.204D-5C.*

statement that, on the previous day, he was sitting in a grove, talking to his own afflicted *thumos*.

Yesterday, worn out with anxieties, away from others
 I was in a shady grove, my soul consumed.
 For how I do so love this drug for sufferings,
 to speak in quiet, me with my own soul.¹¹

He says that talking with himself is a *pharmakon*, a medicine for his sufferings. He often uses the same word to describe the writing of poetry—it, too, for Saint Gregory, is a *pharmakon*; see, for instance, the beginning of the poem *De vita sua*, verse 6: “The meter, when it plays, is a medicine for unhappiness,” a *phármakon anías*¹¹ These two *pharmaka*, self-communion and the writing of verse, would seem to have an integral connection to one another. So much of the verse that he writes is in fact a recounting of the conversation he has with his own soul.

The poem continues with a description of the shady grove in which Gregory found himself the previous day. The language is rich with echoes of Sappho and other lyric poets. The scene itself brings to mind the place beside the stream Ilissus where Socrates talked with Phaedrus about love, language, rhetoric, the nature of the soul, and such things. Among the Fathers, it has been said, Saint Gregory has one of the keenest eyes for the description of nature. One would think that the melody of the birds, the sound of the brook, and the song of the crickets would have helped to cheer him up. But, says Saint Gregory, this was not so. “A mind cloaked round with sorrows doesn’t want to sing back happily” (vv. 14 f.). Then, having described what is outside him, he turns to speak of what is going on in his mind. The contrast is all the more striking because of the serenity of the outside world. Within him, he says, there is a sort of whirlpool of conflicting thoughts. What they come down to is a question about his own being.

Who was I? Who am I? What shall I be? I don’t know clearly.
 Nor can I find one better stocked with wisdom.
 But, as through thick fog, I wander

¹¹*Carm.* 1.2.14, 1-4.

¹²*Carm.* 2.1.11, 6; PG 37.1030; Jungck, ed., 54.

every which way, with nothing, not a dream, of the things I
long for.

For all of us are groundlings, vagabonds, over whom
the swart cloud of the fat flesh hangs.¹³

The question “Who was I? Who am I? What shall I be?” recurs through these elegiac poems of Gregory’s like a refrain. One finds it at the beginning of the poem *peri tēs toū ektiōs anthrópou euteleias*, “On the Cheapness of the Outward Man,” which is traditionally counted as the next poem after “On Human Nature” and forms, in fact, a kind of sequel to it; and, again, at the start of the next poem, “On Different Walks of Life”; so that, it would seem, Gregory gives us a clear signal that *this* is the very theme of these poems. They are meant to be read as meditations upon the question, “Who am I?” Or, more precisely, “Who was I? Who am I? What shall I be?” The question is raised with respect to the past, present, and future. Part of the reason why man’s being is a question to him is that it is distended in this way through time. What he is now is other than what he was before, which, again, is other than what he is going to be.

I am. Think: what does this mean? Something of me’s gone by,
something I’m now completing, another thing I’ll be, if I will be.
Nothing’s for sure. I am, indeed, a troubled river’s current,
always in transit, having nothing fixed.¹⁴

He calls himself here a “current,” a flow or flux; the Greek word is *hróos*, which comes from *hréō*, to flow, as in the Heraclitean saying, *pánta hreî*, everything flows, all things are in the process of changing. Plato uses this word *hróos* in his dialogue the *Theaetetus*: Socrates says to Theaetetus that all the ancient philosophers, with the exception of Parmenides, are in agreement about this point, that, when we speak of things *being* this or that, we speak incorrectly, “for nothing ever is, but all things are becoming.” He asks, when Homer “sings of ‘Ocean whence sprang the gods, and mother Tethys,’ does he not mean that all things are the offspring of flux (*hróos*) and motion?”¹⁵ This word *hróos* reappears a few lines down in Gregory’s

¹³ *Carm.* 1.2.14, 17-22; PG 37.757.

¹⁴ *Carm.* 1.2.14, 25-28; PG 37.757.

¹⁵ Jowett, trans., *Theaet.* 152E.

poem, and the connection with Heraclitus is made explicit. He says:

Now stick with this, and watch, or I'll escape you.
You won't go twice through that same flow of river
that you traversed before, neither will you see the same man
as he is at present.¹⁶

There follows a description of the process of man's birth, and this points to another sense of *hróos*: man himself is a product of a *hróos*, or, as he says in v. 73, of a *hreūsis*, a fluid (see also poem 1.2.15, v. 43). Saint Gregory devotes a remarkable amount of attention in his poems to birth and death. They are the two termini which define the limits of this flux which is man's life, or at least, man's earthly life, the *bios*. And, while on the subject of flux, I should mention also the importance in Gregory's poems of words like *helissô*, a word that means to turn, wind, revolve, from which we get our word "helix." Saint Gregory's poetry is full of the imagery of things turning, flowing, being always in movement. No one who reads his poetry can fail to be struck by this.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that transitoriness is the only thing that Saint Gregory finds problematic about human life. It is, in fact, on account of something stable about man, something that endures, that his own transitoriness strikes him as so hard to take. As Saint Gregory says in the poem *On the Cheapness of the Outward Man*, the animals, in a way, are much better off than man, because they are not troubled by the fact of their own impermanence: "the beast does not tremble at evil, when he dies."¹⁷ But man is troubled. The whole point is made beautifully by Saint Gregory in the short poem "On the Precariousness of Human Nature," which I may as well present here in full:

Myself and time, like birds
or ships at sea, slip past each other,
with nothing that stays put;
but what I've done amiss does not skip by,
but stays: this is life's cruelest pain.
Nor can I tell what to pray for, to live on, or be done:

¹⁶*Carm.* 1.2.14, 30-33; PG 37.758; cf. Heraclitus, frag., 41 Byw., 12, 91 Diels.

¹⁷*Carm.* 1.2.15, 40; PG 37.768.

It's fearful either way. Come, think with me.
Through sins, my life's become an aching mess. But if I die,
ai ai! there's no cure then for your old passions!
If this is what life appoints for you, its anguish is so great
that even when ended it holds no end of troubles,
but on both sides there's a precipice. What's there to say? This
then is what's best:
to look towards You alone, and Your kindheartedness.¹⁸

In this little poem of twelve lines, Saint Gregory opens up for us the whole mystery of sin and forgiveness. Man, he tells us, is not simply a flux; we become aware of our permanence as a result of our actions: they remain *our* actions, and they characterize us as being the very person that we are. “What I’ve done amiss does not skip by, but stays: this is life’s cruelest pain.” We are not simply products of necessity: we are who we are because we have chosen to be so; and sin brings with it the terrible realization that we have made the wrong choice. Sin puts us into this miserable bind where we are left, essentially, with no choice: “Nor can I tell what to pray for, to live on or be done: it’s fearful either way.” At the same time, sin points out to us, in case we hadn’t noticed it before, that we are not simply flux and impermanence. It is striking what a contrast there is between the beginning of the poem, where man’s life seems to be slipping away like birds, and the realization later in the poem that even death doesn’t essentially change man’s predicament. Even after death, Gregory knows, he remains who he is, and he remains answerable for himself. Man is, he finds, a spiritual being; he is created by God in the image of God for the purpose of living and being with God, and of his own will he has fallen away. And this is a very important point, if we are to speak of a doctrine of self-knowledge in these poems: Saint Gregory knows all this, he knows himself, yet this self-knowledge alone does not save him—it simply tells him what a predicament he is in. But, if self-knowledge does not save him, it does provide for him a space in which God can work. He is like a patient who knows his disease, and knows where to look for a cure. The one who knows himself knows also his need for a Redeemer, for the one who, because he has taken man’s sins upon *himself* and nailed sin to the cross, is able to take man’s sin away from him. He, out of his great love,

¹⁸*Carm.* 1.2.13; PG 37.754-55.

has destroyed those things which destroy human life. And so, Gregory turns to this lover of mankind, and approaches him upon the grounds of his love:

What's there to say? This then is what's best:
to look towards You alone, and Your kindheartedness.

I really find this to be a beautiful little poem, and I think it shows very well the extent to which people misinterpret Saint Gregory when they see in his poems merely a kind of pessimism. He remains, even in these poems, I think, a great preacher of evangelical doctrine. Perhaps precisely *because* in these poems we see clearly the misery of man's state, we understand better the love of God in Christ. He is, Gregory says, his *one* hope.

There is one more image in Gregory's poems that I would like to discuss; it occurs in the poem, "On the Cheapness of the Outward Man," vv. 141-46; I like to call it the image of a matushka doll. In this passage, Saint Gregory compares man to a toy, a *paignion*, which has two different faces; if you lift off the one on top, you find another one underneath. The comparison itself is an old one; in the *Symposium*,¹⁹ Alcibiades describes Socrates in much the same terms. But the point of the image there is different. There, Socrates is said to be like a Silenus, one of the clay figures that potters make, because, while outside he is grotesque, inside he bears the image of a god. But here, in Gregory's poem, the point would almost seem to be reversed. It is when you look inside him, Gregory says, that he is ashamed. It is when you compare his outside to what is within. How is one to read this? I am not altogether sure. One thing it does seem to imply is that when Gregory talks about the need for Christ's healing, first of all, the human mind, because the mind, the inner man, is what sins first (a theme which we observed before in Saint Basil), he, Gregory, knows what he is talking about. His polemic with Apollinarius has a basis in his experience of being a Christian: the mind needs neither to be ignored nor to be simply merged and dissolved into some other kind of being; but it is the mind most of all, as man's inmost self, that needs to be healed, transfigured, and saved. I know that, in speaking of the mind as man's inmost self, I may be getting into deep waters theologically. In a certain way, I am fully in agreement with Fr. Wesche, if I have understood him correctly: Christ is

¹⁹ *Symp.* 215a, b.

man's true self. But he is this, I would think, not by way a loss of one's distinct personhood, but by way of a relationship. One could even say, in keeping with Saint Gregory's trinitarian theology, that it is the relation that causes one to be a self. It is by being related to Christ, by being in Christ, by dying and rising with Him, that one finds one's true personhood. These are nice words: but I think that, in Saint Gregory's poems, one can see something of the inner struggle that this dying and rising implied for him.

Let me close by saying that there is an obvious difficulty in trying to speak about the problem of self-knowledge in Saint Gregory's poems. There's altogether too much there to be able to do it justice in a brief essay. At the same time, there is a danger that, if nothing is said, the subject will be overlooked. And this, I think, would be a great mistake, because if anything ties together Saint Gregory's many lines of poetry, it is, before all else, this theme of self-knowledge. Perhaps I will be accused of making too great a generalization here. Certainly Saint Gregory manages in his poetry to speak of other things besides himself, or the problem of knowing oneself; but it is also true that the problem of knowing oneself has a central, crucial place in the poetry. It is what might be called an *isagogic* question, a question that leads on to other things: to the understanding of God and man, to the realization of one's need of a savior, Jesus Christ, and of one's need of other people. It is a curious thing, that the question "Who am I?" for Saint Gregory does not lead to an isolated individualism, but to the exact opposite. If we know ourselves correctly, we will know to what a degree we need one another. The question "Who am I?" leads, paradoxically, to a concern for the Church, since this is the one place where the question receives a true answer. And it is a question that Gregory seems never to grow tired of asking. Some people would perhaps find it surprising that, at the end of his life, a man should still be asking such a thing; as though, by this time, certainly, he should have come to understand who he is. The assumption is that the asking of these questions is embarrassing and sophomoric, something unbefitting a venerable Father of the Church. I have even read somewhere that the Greek Fathers, unlike Saint Augustine, never pose the question "Who am I?" It is, as it were, beneath their spiritual dignity—it makes it seem as though they had problems like the rest of us. Saint Gregory's poems are an excellent antidote to this misreading of the Fathers. One may say what one likes about their literary excellence; but it is impossible not to see

in them a deeply human being. And this humanity of Gregory's does not come from the devices of the Second Sophistic; it comes, before all else, from his perception of the humanity of Christ, and his knowledge of the mystery of man, redeemed in Christ, deified by God's own taking on of our nature, and rejoicing in the light of his divine Spirit.

Poem 1.2.11, *Dialogus cum mundo* (PG 37.752-53).

CONVERSATION WITH THE WORLD

Quest.) I've an issue, world, to bring up with you. Who are you, and whence, teach first, and where are you rolling to?

and why do you turn me round, like a wheel that bears an ant?

Ans.) Where I'm from I don't know, but I know it's from God. And I roll towards something better. But I don't turn you round. But it's you, unworldly one, who act violently towards me.

Quest.) How then, if you stand solid, am I so unsteady?

Ans.) I'm an external object, and what's the advantage of that? But the things you want to do, you can do them, if you choose.

Quest.) Well and good; but who brings about external things ?

Ans.) Why, is it evil? To the good, these are a material of salvation.

Quest.) Then, it's better that someone caused you?

Ans.) So it is.

Poem 1.2.13, *De naturae humanae fragilitate* (PG 37.754-55).

ON THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF HUMAN NATURE

Myself and time, like birds
or ships at sea, slip past each other,
with nothing that stays put;
but what I've done amiss does not skip by,
but stays: this is life's cruellest pain.

Nor can I tell what to pray for, to live on, or be done:
it's fearful either way. Come, think with me.

Through sins my life's become an aching mess. But if I die,
ai ai! there's no cure then for your old passions!

If this is what life appoints for you, its anguish is so great
that even when ended it holds no end of troubles,
but on both sides there's a precipice. What's there to say? This then is what's
best, to look towards You alone, and Your kindheartedness.

Poem 1.2.14, *De humana natura* (PG 37.755-65).

ON HUMAN NATURE

Yesterday, worn out with anxieties, away from others

I was in a shady grove, my soul consumed.

For how I do so love this drug for sufferings,
to speak in quiet, me with my own soul.

And the breezes whispered while the birds sang, 5
granting from the branches a sound slumber,
especially for a soul that's weary. While, from the trees,
deep chanting, clear-toned, lovers of the sun,
whirring locusts made the whole wood to resound.

Nearby flowed cold water by one's feet, 10
gently coursing through the cool grove. But as for me,
the strong sorrow I had had, I had it still.

Therefore I didn't care about these things, since a mind
cloaked round with sorrows doesn't want to sing back happily.

But privately, my mind in a whirlpool spinning, 15
I had this sort of battling round of words:

Who was I? Who am I? What shall I be? I don't know clearly.
Nor can I find one better stocked with wisdom.

But, as through thick fog, I wander
every which way, with nothing, not a dream, of the things I long for. 20
For all of us are groundlings, vagabonds, over whom
the swart cloud of the fat flesh hangs.

But wiser than me is he who, beyond others,
expelled from his heart its ready-spoken lie.

I am. Think: what does this mean? Something of me's gone by, 25
something I'm now completing, another thing I'll be, if I will be.
Nothing's for sure. I am, indeed, a troubled river's current,
always in transit, having nothing fixed.

Which of these, then, will you say that I am?

And what I am more than yourself, come teach me.

Now, stick with this, and watch, or I'll escape you. 30

You won't go twice through that same flow of river
that you traversed before, neither will you see the same man
as he is at present. Present I was in my father's flesh;

my mother then received me, and I was of them both. After this
a glob of flesh, unhuman, too hideous for beholding, of neither
reason nor mind partaking, having my mother for a tomb. 35

We're buried twice, we live upon decay. For this life's road I go,
I see it as the years' expense

that ravaging old age has dished me out. And if thence
eternity receives me, with no wasting, as is said, 40

consider whether life holds not its death, whereas the end
may yet be life for you, contrary to what you think.

I'm a nothing. Why am I so pommelled down by ills, like a thing compacted?
For, for those whose time is brief, this only is constant,
innate, unshakable, unaging. When I had slipped 45
out of my mother's womb, I first let go a tear; though,
for all the kinds of grief I was to meet,
I should have tried to weep before this life.

Now, we've heard of places free of wild beasts, as Crete was once,
and places strangers to cold wind-borne clouds; 50
but no one among mortals has ever made this boast, that,
unvanquished, he has left life's hateful pains.

Feebleness, poverty, birth, death, enmity, rogues,
sea-beasts and land-beasts, sufferings: all this is life.

I have known many woes and utter unhappiness, 55
but of good things, nothing wholly free from pain,
from the time that that bitter price got wiped on me
by the destroying taste, and the adversary's spite.
Well, so much, flesh, for you, incurable, an agreeable
enemy, who never lets up warring,

60 a beast sharply biting, a fire that chills, what a wonder!

It'll be a great wonder, if ever you end up agreeable to me.
To you, soul, shall things hereon be said, as many as is fitting.
Who, what, whence are you? Or who set you about
carrying a corpse, and locked you in the hateful chains of life, 65
always loaded down to earth? How have you mingled
spirit and fat, the flesh with the mind, what is weightless with a burden?
For these things fight in mutual opposition.

If then you entered life co-planted with the flesh:
Ah, how, from afar, has this yoke of marriage shattered me! 70

I am an image of God, and have turned out a son of shame;
I blush at honor's mother, craving lust.

For a liquid engendered men, and it dried up: now a man, then again
no man, but dust: these are your last hopes.

But if heavenly, who, and whence are you? Teach him who longs to know. 75
If a breath and particle of God, as you conceive,
cast out depravity, and I'll believe. For it's no way right
for slime to abide in what's clean, no, not a bit.

For there is no dark particle from the sun, neither has there
shone from a wicked spirit a radiant offspring.

80 Or how do you get propelled by deadly Belial's incitements,
soul, if indeed with heavenly Spirit you've been blended?

For if, with such a helper, you still tilt towards the earth,

ai ai your noxious evil must be undiluted!
But if you didn't come to me from God, what then is your nature? 85
Unless (most terrible thought) I'm merely puffed up with vain glory.
God's creation, paradise, Eden, fame, hope, a commandment,
a world-destroying rainstorm, a storm of a fiery firmament;
then the law, a written remedy; and after that
Christ, blending his own form with ours, so that 90
God, by suffering with my sufferings, might give me a defense,
and perfect me as god by his human image.
Nevertheless, I keep an unchanging bent, while we rush
upon the sword in suicidal madness, like the swine.
What's in fact the good of life? God's light? But then 95
hateful and jealous darkness keeps me from it.
Nothing's of any use to me. And what is there of no use to the wicked?
If only they were equally endowed, with troubles especially!
I lie helpless. Divine terror has bowed me.
I'm worn out by worries, night and day. 100
This thick-necked one has knocked sleep, too, behind me,
and stomped it under foot. But tell me, you, your array of horrors:
dismal Tartarus, flame-scorchers, quirks,
demons, the debt-collectors of our souls.
To the wicked, all a myth: they just value the here and now; 105
torture doesn't turn round wickedness.
Better that transgressors in the end be left unpunished
than that the stings of vice should now depress me.
But why me? why's it for me to sing so much of humankind's misfortunes?
The ache exists for each one of our race. 110
It's not by me that the earth goes unshaken, the gales batter the seas;
and the hours give way to each other in a rush:
night's laid rest to day, th air's grown thick with cold.
The stars by the sun, and the sun by a cloud
find their geauty expunged: and the moon revives. 115
Again, this heaven, full of stars, is half as bright.
And you, Lucifer, were once among the angelic choirs,
O evil-eyed! but you've dropped now shamefaced from the heavens.
Be merciful to me, O Trinity, cherished kingdom: for you've not
wholly escaped the tongues of senseless mortals. 120
“The Father first, the great Child next, and then
the great God's Spirit”: go on, shoot your words.
O where, troubled, misdirected thinking, do you lead me?
Stop. Everything is secondary to God. Give in to reason.
God didn't make me in vain. Over again 125
I should compose this song: this thing is from our poverty of mind.

Now's a fog, but afterwards the Word, and you'll know all,
whether seeing God, or eaten up by fire.
Now, when my friend the mind had sung for me these things,
it nursed the pain. And late from the shady grove I headed home, 130
now laughing at my former state of mind, then once again
heart in anguish smouldering, from a mind at war.

Poem 1.2.15, *De exterioris hominis vilitate* (PG 37.766-78).

ON THE CHEAPNESS OF THE OUTWARD MAN

Who was I? Who am I? What will I become before long?
And where will you bring your great creature to rest, Immortal One,
if, as I wonder, there is anything great in beings who are nothing,
we mortal men, who uselessly stretch the brow.
If what we are were this alone, which has been shown to all, 5
and life's destroyed, nothing would be of use to me.
A young calf abandons the cave where he was born,
he frolics, and nudges the sweet udder.
And at three he takes up the yoke, and hauls a wagon's payload,
adding his mighty neck to the neck of the strong. 10
And a shimmery-skinned fawn, having slipped out from the womb,
straightway sets feet to feet alongside her mother,
and can flee both flesh-devouring dogs, and the swift horse,
and lie hidden with rabbits in thick bramble.
But bears, and the ravaging boars' breed, and lions, 15
the hurricane-like tiger, and the leopard's power,
when they glimpse iron, straightway their hair stands on end:
it stands on end, and they spring upon the sturdy huntsmen.
Again, a bird first lacks wings, but she's fair-winged before long,
and roams the air way up above the housetops. 20
Furthermore, the tawny bee forsakes his hole, and builds a house
instead, filling the residence with his sweet produce.
And all this is the work of one spring, when spontaneous
grows food for all, as the earth supplies a feast.
No vessels cleave the sea for them, nor do they plow; 25
they have no housemaids, or bearers of cups.
The swift wing feeds the bird, and the vale the beast,
who are made to work little, whose care is but of a day.
The great lion, too, as he licks the beast he's killed
(so I have heard), despairs to eat the remnants of his meal. 30
Sometimes he feasts daily, sometimes again
he laps drink, bravely bearing his belly its portion.
Life for these is so much the freer from toil:

home is always at hand among the rocks and branches,
cozy, sturdy, very beautiful. And if sickness 35
subdues them, ungrieving they abandon their stout breath.
They do not stand around keening in lamentable songs
one to another, nor do friends shave off their locks.
I'll say yet more: they meet their end here calmly,
the beast does not tremble at evil when he dies. 40

Now observe also the wretched race of men, as you might call it:
in truth, there's nothing feebler than us humans.
From a fluid I'm produced, and in pangs my mother bore me;
I was raised thanks to many a hateful toil.
In her arms my mother bare me, a sweet travail; whereupon 45
out on the ground I went, bruised and aching.
Then I moved four-legged upon the earth. Next, I picked up
my wobbling steps, held up by hands.
Next, the mind started glowing, in a speechless voice's traces.
After this, I wept under literary tutelage. 50

At twenty I gathered up strength, and went out to encounter
many struggles, like a triumphant athlete.
Other things I've had: some have vanished, some you've toiled at,
as well you've known, my soul, in traversing this life:
an unbelievable undertow, a savage current, a heaving of the sea, 55
here and there hurled up by the pounding winds.
Much have I been shaken by stupidities; and much has the demon
adversary of our life brought on besides.
For if you should counterpose all life's pleasures and pains,
drawing up the balance in the midst, 60

the scale weighed full with evil would sink down to the earth,
while the side with the good would shoot back up again.
Combat, the sea, the field, labor, pilferers,
acquisition, taxassessors, taxcollectors, loudmouths,
orators, books, judges, a sacrilegious ruler: 65

all these are this dismal life's enjoyments.

Consider, again, these pleasures: bloatedness, loadedness, singing and laughter,
the tomb forever filled with clammy corpses,
wedding gifts, marriage, another when the first breaks up,
adulterers, their killers, children who cause suspicion's anguish,
beauty, a faithless allure, ugliness, a fearless evil, 70

the worries of the high-born, the low-born's miseries,
wealth and poverty's two-fold evil, arrogance, sickness:
a ball of novelties has bounced back into our hands.
In view, therefore, of these things, I am eaten up within, wondering whether
anyone can suppose

that this is best, where what's bad outweighs what's good.
 Don't you weep when you hear how much suffering was also of old?
 I cannot tell if you'll weep or laugh in hearing it.
 For the wise, again, both things would coincide:
 some found cause of tears, others of laughter: 80
 as when Trojans and Achaeans smashed heads,
 slaughtering one another, on account of a petty whore.
 The Curetes, too, and the Aetolians staunch in battle, fought
 over a swine's head, and a piglet's bristles.
 Aiakos' kin were hymned at large, but they died, the one by enemies' 85
 furious hands, the other by pure lechery.
 Amphitryon's son Hercules had a great fame, but he, the all-
 destroyer, succumbed to a flesh-consuming garment.
 Neither Cyrus nor Croesus evaded a bad end,
 nor did so many of our erstwhile emperors. 90
 And you, dragonlike force unstoppable, wine did you in,
 Alexander, when you had overrun all the earth.
 What good are the decomposed? They are but dust and bones,
 the hero Agamemnon, Iros the vegetarian.
 The emperor Constantine, and my page: one was unlucky, 95
 the other, super-rich; now, only their tombs differ.
 So goes it here; but concerning another existence, who's to say?
 What things shall the unrighteous receive on that last day:
 fire that roars, a gruesome darkness, to be far away from light,
 the worm, the ceaseless remembrance of our own evil. 100
 Better had it ben for you, vile man, if you'd never crossed life's gates—
 or if, having crossed them, like the beasts you'd perished utterly,
 rather than to find again, after all your sufferings here,
 yet worse punishments than those you've already met.
 Where's my forefather's great honor? It perished with his meal. 105
 Where's sharp-witted Solomon? Conquered by his wives.
 Where is he who was counted among the twelve, Judas,
 who, for a little gain, was flooded round with darkness?
 O Lord Christ, I beg you, grant right soon a cure for evils,
 causing your servant to arise from out of here, O Blessed One! 110
 For humans, there's but one thing safe and sound:
 heavenly hopes, of which I breathe but little.
 Of other goods I've had an abundant glut. Such things as
 schlep along the ground, I long to leave them all to mortal men:
 homeland, foreign lands, sees, and the prayer to be done with one's see,¹¹⁵
 neighbors, strangers, the pious, the wicked,
 the forthright, the secretive, those whose eye bears no malice,
 those who pine with suicidal evil within.

- Leave life's pleasures to others: I shall most eagerly avoid them.
Ho the sufferings of this most lengthy life! 120
- How long to keep producing turds? Just so, everything valuable
in this life of ours has a two-edged benefit:
it is both received and discarded by measure, day by day.
- The throat holds some, the sewer all the rest.
- Winter again, summer again, springtime, fall, in alternation; 125
days and nights, the dual perspective of our lives;
heaven, the earth, the sea: there's nothing in this that's new to me,
neither in what stands still nor what keeps turning.
- Enough with them! Give me, please, another life, another world:
striving for this, I'll bear all sufferings gladly. 130
- If only I had died when wrapped up in my mother's womb,
and when the tears first came, there had been darkness!
- What is life? I've leapt from one tomb, I go to another,
and after that tomb, I'll be buried in fire, uncared for.
- What little I breathe is, a swift-running river's flow, 135
always receding and returning again,
having nothing stable: it's only dust that flies into
my eyes, so that I tumble far below God's lights,
feeling my way about the walls, and wandering here and there.
- Let me keep my two feet out of this great life. 140
- I'll venture to make this true assertion: that man therefore
is God's toy, like one of the ones they feature in the cities.
On top is an extra, handmade face; if this gets lifted off,
I am ashamed, and suddenly I'm shown to be somebody else.
- Such is the entire life of miserable men, whose preoccupations 145
are like the hopes of dreams. These things you have but briefly.
But I who have clung to Christ will never let go,
even when loosed from this earthly life's chains.
- For, in truth, I am two-fold: the body was formed down here,
and, again, it therefore nods down towards this ground. 150
- But the soul is a breath of God, and always yearns exceedingly
for a greater share of the things of heaven above.
- Like a fountain's flow is its trajectory; bounding upwards,
it knows the brilliant path of fire as the one thing changeless.
- So great is man, as a very angel; when he jumps away, 155
like a serpent, old and spotted, off he goes.
- Yes leap, ye priests, I'm dead. And you, wicked
neighbors, don't be frightened of me as formerly.
- Fortify for yourselves the eternal Lord's
great house. But I, having left off all, retain one thing: 160
the cross of my life, a shining pillar. And so, when I arise

from hence, and am joined to celestial burnt offerings,
there will be no envy, a created evil, if it's right to call it this,
when, unenvying, I will pray for the envious, too.

Poem 1.2.18, *De vita humana* (PG 37.786-87).

CONCERNING HUMAN LIFE

From dirt to mud, then back to dust again.
For earth is reunited again with earth,
and in earthly swaddling-clothes is swaddled,
and dirt once more flies forward like the dust
which the violent twisting of the winds
lifts up on high, then throws back down.
And so it is with our much-swirling life
which the heady winds of wickedness
raise up on high, to counterfeit acclaim.
But again the dirt drops down, and stays below,
until the Creator's Word accords
the things conjoined their necessary parting.
But now there peers out, as if from some depth,
the dirt, made spiritual by the divine image,
and cries aloud in earthly tragedies,
and weeps this life, wherein it seems to joke.



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Toward Trinitarian *Perichoresis*: Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 31.14*

JOHN P. EGAN

I HAD PLANNED TO START THIS PAPER WITH THEODOROU'S USE OF THE term *perichoresis* in his description of Gregory's trinitarian teaching in *Or. 31.14*. Eventually I became aware that Pseudo-Cyril was the first to use the notion of trinitarian *perichoresis* and that he did so in a context where he incorporated and expanded Gregory's *Or. 31.14*. Consequently, I undertook the study of the context in which Ps.-Cyril introduced that notion, as well as the study of that author's additions to Gregory's text.

My purpose in this paper is to try to determine to what extent Gregory anticipates Ps.-Cyril's teaching of trinitarian *perichoresis*. Part I of the paper will begin with some brief remarks on *Or. 31* in general and on section 14 in particular. These remarks will be followed by a presentation of Theodorou's interpretation of Gregory's *Or. 31.14* and of Harrison's contributions to this study. In part 2, I shall study Ps.-Cyril's text in its context. In part 3, I shall compare Gregory's text and Ps.-Cyril's expanded version. The paper will conclude by suggesting that most of Ps.-Cyril's additions to Gregory's *Or. 31.14* reflect his dissatisfaction with Gregory's presentation of the divine unity. This dissatisfaction may be taken as a sign that Ps.-Cyril did not find his own understanding of trinitarian *perichoresis* fully developed in *Or. 31.14*.

Introduction

Gregory's *Oration 31*, entitled "On the Holy Spirit," continues to be regarded as his *Fifth Theological Oration*. Until the extant

manuscripts have all been examined, Frederick Norris, for example, is content with the 27-31 order as a well-attested and well-argued alternative.¹

Apropos of the time and place of the delivery of *Oration 31*, Norris observes that the remark in two manuscripts, D and P—indicating that the oration was given at Constantinople—reflects a tenth-century tradition. Thus, this remark does not answer the question whether this oration was part of the original series as presented or published.²

In *Oration 31.14*, as Edmund Beck observes, Gregory abandons the traditional two-membered trinitarian image of sun and radiance, in favor of the image of three interconnected suns in which there exists a single intermingling of light.³ Gregory writes: “It is as if there were a single intermingling of light, which existed in three mutually connected Suns.”⁴

In his work on the analogy of light in Gregory’s theology, A. Theodorou uses the term *perichoresis* in his description of Gregory’s trinitarian teaching in this passage. He writes:

In this passage, the Saint’s faith is admirably expressed. The persons of the holy Trinity, who lovingly coinhere [έμπειρχωροῦνται] in one another are presented as three (natural) suns, mutually connected (each one is found within the others) whose light, common to all three, constitutes a single outpouring of blended light.⁵

Theodorou does not explain why he uses the term *perichoresis* apropos of this text.

But as Verna Harrison points out, although the concept of the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity occurs in John’s Gospel

¹ Introduction and commentary by Frederick W. Norris, trans. Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen* (Leiden, 1991), pp. 76, 80.

² Norris, p. 183.

³ Edmund Beck, *Ephrāms Trinitätslehre im Bild von Sonne, Feuer, Licht und Wärme* (Leuven, 1981), p. 20.

⁴ Text: Paul Gallay, ed. and trans., in collaboration with Maurice Jourjon, *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 27-31*, SC 250 (Paris, 1978), p. 302; Wickham and Williams, trans., *Faith Gives Fullness*, p. 286.

⁵ A. Theodorou, “Light as Image and Symbol in the Theology of Gregory of Nazianzos” [in Greek], *Theologia*, 47 (1976), 253-54.

and in earlier patristic texts, an anonymous seventh century author known to scholars as Ps.-Cyril of Alexandria seems to have been the first to call that mutual indwelling *perichoresis*.⁶ He does so in his *Trin.* 10. Harrison describes this treatise as embodying the work of an important seventh century Chalcedonian theologian who stands between Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene. The latter incorporated large excerpts of this treatise in his *De fide orthodoxa*.⁷

Ps.-Cyril's Text in Its Context

Turning to the passage where the term *perichoresis* occurs, Harrison notes that Ps.-Cyril emphasizes that the three persons are one in being and differ only in their relations of origin.⁸ I would like to make some observations on the context, for it provides some of the terms which the author adds in his supplemented version of Gregory's *Or. 31.14*.

In the immediate context the author introduces the difference between knowledge based on reality and knowledge based on reason and thought. He then applies that difference to the distinction between persons both human and divine and their unity of nature. On the human level, the distinction of persons is regarded as real, but their unity of nature is apprehended by reason and thought. Ps.-Cyril writes:

One ought, moreover, to recognize that it is one thing to look at a matter as it is, and another thing to look at it in the light of reason and thought. In the case of all created things, the distinction of the subsistences is observed in actual fact. For in actual fact Peter is seen to be separated from Paul. But the community and connection and unity are apprehended by reason and thought.⁹

On the divine level, the situation is the reverse. There the unity

⁶Verna Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 35 (1991) 53, note 1, 59-60.

⁷Harrison, pp. 59-60.

⁸Harrison, pp. 59.

⁹Text: Bonifatius Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 2 (Berlin, 1973), pp. 28, 223-27; *John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, trans. D. F. Salmond, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, Vol. 9 (New York, 1898), p. 10.

of the persons is regarded as real because of their coeternity and oneness in being. The author writes:

And this may be perceived throughout the whole of creation, but in the case of the holy and superessential and incomprehensible Trinity, far removed from everything, it is quite the reverse. For there the community and unity are observed in fact, through the co-eternity of the subsistences, and through their having the same essence. . . .¹⁰

The divine persons are distinct only in their relations of origin, and this distinction is perceived only by reason and thought. Ps.-Cyril writes:

For each one of them is related as closely to the other as to itself: that is to say that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in all respects, save those of not being begotten, of birth and of procession. But it is by thought that the difference is perceived.¹¹

Ps.-Cyril then denies the possibility of attributing human persons' local separation [*τοπικὴν διάστασιν*] to the uncircumscribed Deity, because the three divine persons do exist in one another, not so as to be confounded but so as to cohere. The author writes: "For with reference to the uncircumscribed Deity we cannot speak of separation in space, as we can in our own case. For the subsistences dwell in one another, in no wise confused but cleaving together."¹² I note that the term *perichoresis* is not yet used in this text.

The author goes on to deny among the divine persons any of the differences which produce real and absolute separation [*diairesin*] among human persons. Ps.-Cyril writes: "nor can one admit difference in will or judgment or energy or power or anything else whatsoever which may produce actual and absolute separation in our case."¹³ He denies tritheism, affirms monotheism, and asserts that in the Trinity the Son and Spirit are referred to one cause and not conjoined

¹⁰Text: Kotter, 2:28, 238-41; translation: Salmond, p. 10.

¹¹Text: Kotter, 2:29, 246-50; translation: Salmond, p. 10.

¹²Text: Kotter, 2:29, 253-55; translation: Salmond, p. 10.

¹³Text: Kotter, 2:29, 257-58; translation: Salmond, p. 11.

or confounded according to the contraction of Sabellios. The author writes: “Wherefore we do not speak of three Gods, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but rather of one God, the holy Trinity, the Son and Spirit being referred to one cause, and not compounded or coalesced according to the *synaeresis* [contraction] of Sabellius.”¹⁴

At this point in the passage the term *perichoresis* occurs. Ps.-Cyril writes: “For, as we said, they are one not so as to be confounded but so as to cleave to one another and they possess coinherence [περιχώρηση] in one another without any coalescence or confusion.”¹⁵

The author then returns to his denial of any actual separation between the divine persons, and he rejects the division which Arius introduced between Father, Son and Spirit. Ps.-Cyril writes: “Nor do the Son and the Spirit stand apart, nor are they sundered in essence according to the *diaeresis* [division] of Arius.”¹⁶ It is at this point that Ps.-Cyril provides his expanded version of Gregory’s *Or. 31.14*. Before moving on to an analysis of that version, I wish to draw some conclusions from my analysis of the context in which the author introduces the notion of trinitarian *perichoresis*. As I have already suggested, the context provides some of the terms which Ps.-Cyril adds in his enlarged version of Gregory’s *Or. 31.14*.

As an analysis of this version will shortly show, one of these terms is ἀδιάστατος (“undivided” or “inseparable”). This term added by the author reflects his denial of any real and absolute separation (*διαίρεσιν*) among the divine persons. It is surely not an accident that the term *diairesin* reoccurs in the passage where the notion of *perichoresis* is introduced, between the rejection of Sabellios’ “contraction” (*συναίρεσιν*) and Arius’ “division” (*diairesin*) of the Godhead.¹⁷

Finally, since my purpose in this paper is to determine to what extent Gregory’s *Or. 31.14* anticipates Ps.-Cyril’s teaching on trinitarian *perichoresis*, it is important to note that author’s borrowings from Gregory’s other orations in the context where he introduces that teaching. Among the borrowings relevant to the teaching on trinitarian *perichoresis*, I consider the one from Gregory’s *Or. 20.7* to be the most important.

¹⁴Text: Kotter, 2:29, 258-62; translation: Salmond, p. 11.

¹⁵Text: Kotter, 2:29, 262-64; translation altered: Salmond, p. 11.

¹⁶Text: Kotter, 2:29, 264-65; translation: Salmond, p. 11.

¹⁷See the texts referred to in footnotes 14 and 16.

Or. 20 is entitled “On Theology and the Installation of Bishops.” According to its most recent editor, Justin Mossay, it was probably written at Constantinople around the same time as were the *Theological Orations*, i.e. between the spring of 379 and the summer of 381.¹⁸ Norris points out that some Syriac translations and some early Greek manuscripts suggest that *Or. 20* may have been regarded as the *First Theological Oration*.¹⁹ Section 7 contains, apropos of the Son and the Spirit, the expression “referred to one cause and not conjoined or confounded.” Gregory writes: “Let the one God be retained, and let the Son and Spirit be referred to one cause (and not compounded or coalesced) in keeping with the unity and identity of the movement and will of the Divinity and the identity in essence.”²⁰

This same expression occurs in Ps.-Cyril.²¹ Unlike Ps.-Cyril, Gregory does not mention Sabellius in connection with this expression. In section 7, Gregory affirms that Father, Son and Spirit are one God, that the Father is without beginning, i.e. without cause, and that the Son is united to the Father as to his cause.²² Section 6, however, contains a profession of faith directed against the Sabellians.²³

A Comparison of Gregory’s Or. 31.14 and Ps.-Cyril’s Expanded Version

Before turning to an analysis of these two passages, some remarks on the context of Gregory’s *Or. 31.14* are in order. Gregory speaks here of “both parties.” He writes:

But what is our case, our battle, against both parties alike? We have one [G]od because there is a single Godhead. Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it. They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. They

¹⁸Justin Mossay, ed. and trans., in collaboration with Guy Lafontaine, *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 20-23*, SC 270 (Paris, 1980), pp. 52 and 202.

¹⁹Norris, p. 75.

²⁰Mossay, p. 70.

²¹Kotter, 2:29, pp. 258-62; Salmond, p. 11.

²²Mossay, p. 40.

²³Mossay, p. 43.

are not sundered in will or divided in power. You cannot find there any of the properties inherent in things divisible. In a nutshell, the Godhead exists undivided in separate beings.²⁴

The expression “both parties” refers, according to Norris, to the later Arians who claimed that the Spirit must be a creature and to those among the Pneumatomachians who accepted the divinity of the Son but denied the divinity of the Spirit.²⁵ Gregory is struggling to establish the position that the Spirit is God. In Norris’ view, in order to take on both parties in this struggle, Gregory must return to the question of three gods.²⁶

According to Edmund Beck,²⁷ Gregory’s point in this passage is that, notwithstanding the threeness, there remains the one Godhead.²⁸ For none of the three is God to a higher or lower degree, none is earlier or later, and neither will nor power creates a division among them. Thus, the denial of division among the Father, Son and Spirit is common to both Gregory and Ps.-Cyril.

After denying division, Gregory affirms that the Godhead “exists undivided in separate beings.”²⁹ This affirmation is the beginning of the passage which Ps.-Cyril incorporates and expands. Beck³⁰ observes that the paradox expressed in this statement is followed immediately by an image which illustrates it: “It is as if there were a single intermingling of light, which existed in three mutually connected Suns.”³¹

Ps.-Cyril makes his first addition to Gregory’s text here. I shall first indicate his additions as they occur and then suggest where he found them and why he made them. Firstly, he adds “without separation ($\alpha\deltaιαστάτιος$)” to Gregory’s “three suns cleaving to each other” in the following passage:

For the deity is undivided amongst things divided, to put it

²⁴Text: Gallay, p. 302; Wickham and Williams, p. 286.

²⁵Norris, pp. 196-97.

²⁶Norris, p. 198.

²⁷Beck, p. 20.

²⁸Gallay, p. 302; Wickham and Williams, p. 286.

²⁹Gallay, 302; Wickham and Williams, p. 286.

³⁰Beck, p. 20.

³¹Gallay, p. 302; Wickham and Williams, p. 286.

concisely: and it is just like three suns cleaving to each other without separation and giving out light mingled and conjoined into one. When, then, we turn our eyes to the Divinity, and the first cause and the sovereignty and the oneness and sameness, so to speak, of the movement and will of the Divinity, and the identity in essence and power and energy and lordship, what is seen by us is unity. But when we look to those things in which the Divinity is, or to put it more accurately, which are the Divinity, and those things which are in it through the first cause without time or distinction in glory or separation, that is to say, the subsistences of the Son and the Spirit, it seems to us a Trinity that we adore.³²

Secondly, he adds “and conjoined (*συνάφεια*)” to Gregory’s “light mingled” in lines 3 and 4. Thirdly, he adds several elements to Gregory’s “first cause and the sovereignty” in lines 5 to 8. Fourthly, he adds precision to Gregory’s “in which the Divinity is” with the alternative, “or, to put it more accurately, which are the divinity. . . .” in lines 9 and 10. Fifthly, he adds “or separation (*adiastatos*)” to Gregory’s “without distinction in glory” in lines 11 and 12. Finally, he further specifies Gregory’s “in which the Divinity is” in line 9 with the clarification, “that is to say, the subsistences (*ὑποστάσεις*) of the Son and the Spirit” in line 12.

Apropos of Ps.-Cyril’s expanded version of Gregory’s *Or. 31.14*, I note that the author’s two denials of separation among the divine persons—his addition of the term “conjoined” (*synapheia*) and the list (appended to Gregory’s “first cause and the sovereignty”) of the ways in which the Godhead is one and the same—are both directly related to the unity of God.

Looking for the proximate sources of these elements, I find that these additions to Gregory’s *Or. 31.14* come either from the immediate context in which Ps.-Cyril quotes that passage or from another of Gregory’s orations. I have already suggested that the denial of separation comes from the immediate context. Likewise, the notion of connection (*synapheia*) is found in the immediate context where the author regards the unity of human nature as apprehended only by reason and thought.³³ Some of the items from the list of the ways in which

³²Text: Kotter, 2:29, pp. 265-30, 274; translation: Salmond, p. 11.

³³Kotter 2:28, pp. 223-27; Salmond, p. 10.

the Godhead is one and the same are found in Gregory's *Or. 20.7*, to which I have already referred. There Gregory speaks of the unity and identity of the Divinity's movement and will and of the Divinity's oneness in being.³⁴ Two of the three remaining items on the list, namely "energy" and "power" come from the immediate context.³⁵

I turn next to Ps.-Cyril's addition, "which are the Divinity," in line 10 of the text cited above. The question here is: why does the author provide this alternative to Gregory's "in which the Divinity is" in line 9? The answer is to be found in Norris' observation that Gregory's language in lines 10-12 suggests a cause outside of or before the three. This suggestion, in Norris' view, entails the consequence that part of the definition of the Godhead does not reside within the three.³⁶ It seems to me that Ps.-Cyril saw the possibility that Gregory's language could be understood in the way which Norris describes, and he sought to correct that possible misunderstanding by the alternative which he provides.

However, on the basis of *Or. 31.33*, I suggest that Gregory was aware of the deficiency of his presentation of the "primal cause" in *Or. 31.14*. He writes:

It is as if there were a single intermingling of light, which existed in three mutually connected Suns. When we look at the Godhead, the primal cause, the sole sovereignty, we have a mental picture of the single whole, certainly. But when we look at the three in whom the Godhead exists, who derive their timeless and equally glorious being from the primal cause, we have three objects of worship.³⁷

In *Or. 31.33*, Gregory is criticizing the image of a sunbeam reflected off water and then onto a wall. Gregory remarks that this image is unacceptable because it introduces a cause prior to the sunbeam. Gregory writes: "However, this illustration too was unacceptable to me. First, because it was quite clear what had set the sunbeam in motion, whereas nothing is prior to God to be his mover—he is cause of all and owns no prior cause. . . ."³⁸ My suggestion is that

³⁴Mossay, 40.

³⁵Kotter, 2:29, pp. 257-58; Salmond, p. 11.

³⁶Norris, p. 199.

³⁷Text: Gallay, pp. 302, 304; Wickham and Williams, p. 286.

³⁸Text: Gallay, p. 340; Wickham and Williams, p. 298.

Gregory's realization that there is no cause outside of or before the three is an implicit criticism of his own presentation of the "primal cause" in *Or. 31.14*.

Verna Harrison observes that Ps.-Cyril stresses the unity of God and uses the coinherence (*perichoresis*) of the three persons to reinforce his affirmation of their oneness in being.³⁹ My analysis of the context in which the author uses *perichoresis* confirms Harrison's judgment, as does my study of the author's first five additions to Gregory's *Or. 31.14* in the same context.

I turn next to Ps.-Cyril's final addition, namely, his further specification of Gregory's "in which the Divinity is" in line 9 of the expanded version. In line 12, he adds the clarification "that is to say, the subsistences (*θποστάσεις*) of the Son and the Spirit." The significance of this clarification is brought out by Fraigneau-Julien's contention that Ps.-Cyril regards the divine persons as really distinct.⁴⁰ Fraigneau-Julien claims that when the author affirms that the distinction between the divine persons is perceived only by reason and thought,⁴¹ he means not that they are not really distinct, but that they are not distinct according to the divine being which is identical in them.⁴² Fraigneau-Julien would agree with Harrison that the divine persons' mutual indwelling (*perichoresis*) presupposes a confession of their distinctness.⁴³

Summary and Conclusions

My analysis of the immediate context in Ps.-Cyril's *Trin. 10* has led me to agree with Verna Harrison that there the author stresses the unity of God. This study of the context has also revealed one borrowing from another of Gregory's orations, where he stresses the unity of God apparently to Ps.-Cyril's satisfaction. Moreover, a comparison of contexts reveals the same denial of division among the divine persons in both *Or. 31.14* and *Trin. 10*.

From my study of Ps.-Cyril's additions to Gregory's text apropos of the divine unity, I conclude that the author felt the need to bolster

³⁹Harrison, p. 59.

⁴⁰B. Fraigneau-Julien, "Un Traité anonyme de la sainte Trinité attribué à S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie," *Recherches de science religieuse*, 49 (1961), 392-93.

⁴¹Kotter, 2:29, p. 246-50; Salmond, p. 10.

⁴²Fraigneau-Julien, p. 393.

⁴³Harrison, p. 59.

Gregory's presentation of the divine unity expressed in that text. Moreover, the need which Ps.-Cyril apparently felt to counter a possible misunderstanding of Gregory's use of the notion of "first cause" suggests his lack of satisfaction with Gregory's presentation of the divine unity in that same passage. By contrast, Ps.-Cyril's final addition apropos of the distinctness of the divine persons suggests his agreement with Gregory's teaching on that point.

In addition, I find Theodorou's use of the term *perichoresis* to describe Gregory's teaching on the Trinity in *Or. 31.14* unsatisfactory, because he does not refer to the late appearance of that term, as used in a trinitarian context. Ps.-Cyril's reference to Gregory's texts, including *Or. 31.14*, in the context of his introduction of trinitarian *perichoresis*, suggests that the author found support for his teaching in those texts. Whether Ps.-Cyril suggests that his understanding of trinitarian *perichoresis* is already found in those texts is another question.

Harrison has observed that Ps.-Cyril stresses the unity of God and uses trinitarian *perichoresis* in order to reinforce his affirmation of the oneness of the divine being. I suggest that Ps.-Cyril's apparent lack of satisfaction with Gregory's presentation of the divine unity in *Or. 31.14* is a sign that Ps.-Cyril did not find, in that text, an understanding of trinitarian *perichoresis* identical to his own.



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